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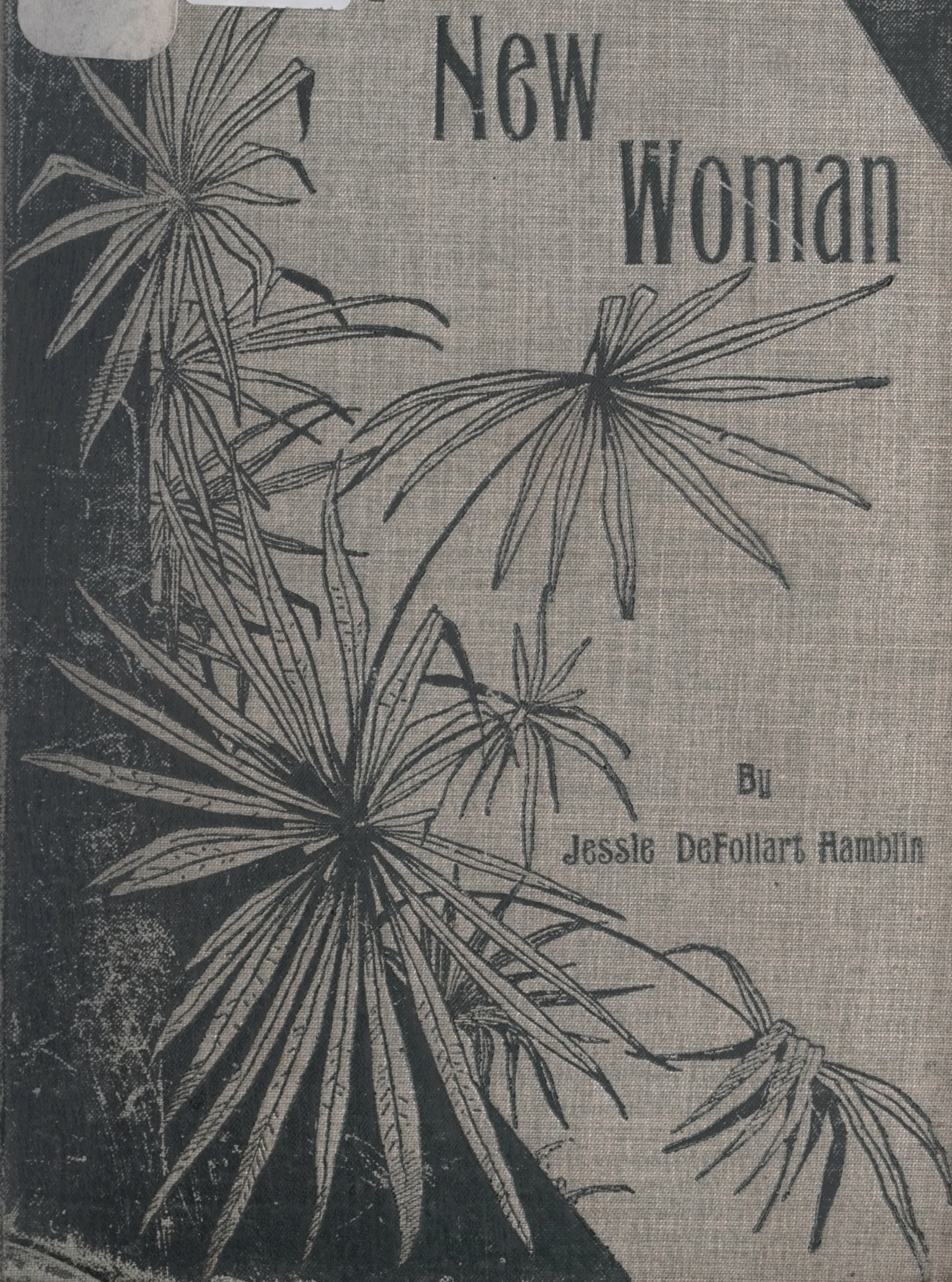
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A New Woman

By

Jessie DeFollart Hamblin



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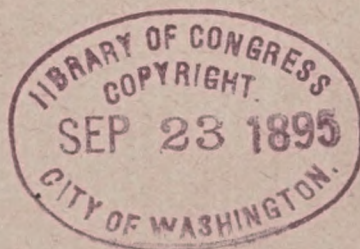
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A NEW WOMAN

BY

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JESSIE DEFOLIART HAMBLIN



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CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY
175 MONROE STREET

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A NEW WOMAN.

CHAPTER I.

It is an August evening in the metropolis of England. Two gentlemen are seated in an elegantly appointed room, talking politics, society and scandal.

"But, my lord, I do not agree with you."

"Certainly not, Sir Alfred; I didn't expect it. You never agree with any one. But, let's change the subject. Just look at this picture. That—that object is a female; in other words a woman; and that thing she has on is a divided skirt; and this you probably recognize to be a cigar. It's going to be the fashion pretty soon. Isn't it horrible! Just think of it, Sir Alfred, just think of making love to a divided skirt. Is your imagination vivid enough to picture it? What is the world coming to?"

"My lord, the world is going to hell at a Nancy Hanks speed. Women, instead of trying to lift men to their standard, are lowering themselves to ours, and we know that has never been very high, morally. But I suppose the poor things have become discouraged; have grown tired of pulling against the tide and concluded to turn and go with us."

"You are much too particular. It isn't the women of to-day that I'm objecting to, but the inevitable divided skirt. Of course, it will be all right after

we become accustomed to it, but at first it will be rather embarrassing, you know. We will half imagine that we are making love to one of our own sex. Oh, confound it, it will be very unpleasant for a little while."

"The world is going to hell, that's all," Sir Alfred said with calm earnestness.

"Well, you must admit the trip is very pleasant and exciting."

"It certainly is exciting and there is a kind of unbridled pleasure about it, but there is no heart-felt happiness, no serene contentment."

"No such things live to-day, except in poetry. You were born too late. A hundred years ago women were chaste and their delight was in their husbands, but the world no longer produces the sort of women you admire. It's all bosh about the sacredness of the fireside, anyway. We've outlived such nonsense. Oh, every woman has her hero, I suppose, but she's gotten over wanting to live with just him forever and ever, on an island. The honeymoon is quite long enough for her to see no one but her husband and much too long for him to see no woman but his wife. But have some wine to wash down my argument. You see, we've been out of school nearly twenty years and surely have gotten over hunting for an Alice Darvil or a Sybil Warner. They are simply not to be found in our set, and English gentlemen can't marry beneath their rank, unless, indeed, they go to America."

"Is the wine something new?"

"Yes, I just got a cask of it a few days ago."

"From where?"

"Well, I should say hell, if I didn't know it came from France. Say, it will make your hair stand on end if you take more than one glass." .

"Nonsense, it doesn't taste so sharp. It's splendid. Let me taste it again," and Sir Alfred poured out a second glass.

"Certainly, certainly! I never stop from fear of consequences. That's it, take another. But say, have you met Lord Melton's bride yet?"

"I've seen her, but haven't met her. Quite good looking, but I don't see how she could have married him. There isn't anything about him to attract an intelligent woman's attention; poor, too."

"Why, he has a title."

"Yes."

"And she is an American."

"Y-e-s."

"It's as plain as day, now, isn't it?"

"I'm afraid it is. But isn't it growing terribly disgusting, the way Americans toady to our aristocracy? It was bad enough in the women, but now the men are beginning to come here. I tell you, Lord Avon, I haven't words to express my contempt for the snobs. They are despised as much by true Englishmen as by true Americans. Equally despicable is the conduct of our noblemen who take their impoverished titles to an American market."

"Sir Alfred, for heaven's sake, hush. I didn't know that any Englishman would bring such an accusation against his own land. I know that over in America they think that every titled man who

sets foot upon their soil is in quest of an heiress. That isn't all; they are so devilish frank they don't hesitate to tell you so, in no very delicate way either." Lord Avon looked very much disgusted as he reached for another glass of wine. "But you are the first Englishman I ever heard rail at our society." His lordship's face was beginning to flush as the wine flowed more freely.

"Well, it's the truth, my lord. England has impoverished nobles, and America has rich daughters. The exchange is fair enough, as both parties are satisfied; but the spectacle is nauseating, just the same. Reach me the wine. Now, as for me, I'm a true Briton, every heart-throb is true to dear old England; but—but I must admit, I must say what I have never said before, that she is retrograding, that she is becoming polluted. She is rotten to the core; from palace to hovel, from prince to peasant." Sir Alfred spoke rapidly. The wine had overcome his habitual reserve.

"Think what you please, say what you please, but don't slander old England. *Don't you slander old England.* She's all right. England for aristocracy and America for heiresses, every time. Hurrah for good old England! America is all right; bless her pretty daughters. I may go there for a wife some day, myself; in fact, the more I think about it, the more I think I will. Yes, I will. Sir Alfred, I challenge you—I challenge you to a contest, and bet you fifty pounds that I can go to America and be engaged to an heiress before you are."

"Do you mean that you will simply be engaged first or that you can be married first?"

"I meant engaged, and I can, too; but if I'm not married first, I'll forfeit the bet, for I say I can do it, and I will do it. Sir Alfred, aren't you going to take the bet? Surely an English gentleman—"

"Fifty pounds! Why didn't your lordship bet a pair of cuffs?"

"Sir Alfred, an English gentleman won't take such a taunt coolly. I'll bet you fifty thousand. Do you accept?"

"Most certainly; do you mean to insult me by insinuating that I would hesitate to do so?"

Here they shook hands. The thing was settled and so were they, to some extent. That fifty thousand acted as a cooler. They moved away from the wine and sat down in another part of the room.

"Did I understand, your lordship, that marriage must follow if such an engagement take place? You know a gentleman would feel a little delicate about marrying a woman he had bet on."

"I should think he'd feel a little delicate about backing out of an engagement; however, that rests with each as a private matter."

"My lord, shall we have a contract?"

"I think, that as we are Englishmen, our word is quite enough. Yours, at least, is sufficient for me."

"Very well then."

"Does your cigar taste strong, Sir Alfred?"

"Why, no, I hadn't noticed anything of the sort."

"Well, mine does. My head feels infernally light and queer."

A sickly smile crossed Sir Alfred's face. He knew very well that he was drunk and saw no reason why

Lord Avon should not be also. Certainly enough wine had flowed, and the excessive bet constituted strong testimony.

Lord Avon is a typical Englishman; five feet ten in height; weighs one hundred and eighty pounds; is well built and carries himself with dignity. He has the prettiest blonde hair, silken and curly as a baby's, and the most beautiful of all beautiful mustaches, which he pets and caresses constantly. He hasn't an enemy in the world; everybody loves him quite as much as he does himself.

Sir Alfred is taller, and although not so handsome as his friend, is more distinguished looking, possessing a strong face and reserved, almost haughty manners. He is an only child of Lord Gates, a baron of much political sagacity and indefatigable energy, but whose example excites no emulation in his son, for at the age of thirty-eight Sir Alfred has accomplished nothing for himself, and stands looking disdainfully on while others less gifted than himself push forward and secure higher seats.

These two young men were great friends at school and are friends yet, in a worldly way, but they have long since gotten over the desire to share all their secrets; and now tell each other only of such affairs as any friendly acquaintance might be permitted to know. Like all English gentlemen, they drink, and often to excess, but to-night's spree has gone beyond all precedent, as even their muddled minds are beginning to suggest. His lordship threw his half-smoked cigar away—he never smoked more than half of a cigar, lest it might burn his mustache—and looked at his watch.

"What time is it?" Sir Alfred asked.

"Half past one, but I'm infernally sleepy."

"So am I. I'm going home."

"Don't hurry, don't hurry. Let's have some more wine; might as well enjoy ourselves while we may."

"No, no, I'll go home and to sleep."

"Good-night, Sir Alfred; pleasant dreams," gayly chattered his lordship as his friend departed, feeling thoroughly disgusted, heartily sick of the evening's recklessness.

CHAPTER II.

THE next day when Lord Avon opened his pretty brown eyes, something very like an oath was breathed through his blonde mustache.

"Fifty thousand pounds, as I'm an Englishman! Now, what could have induced me to make such a bet? I really can't understand at all. It was certainly very careless in me. However, it is done, and a gentleman never backs down. But I must win that bet; to lose it would be my ruin. Let me see—what one had I better take. There was Miss Cameron, sensible and rich, but I believe that she was to have been married before this, so she don't count. Then there's Senator Smith's daughter, but if I have been rightly informed, her father has gone to the wall. That lets her out. Miss Craig was sensible and rich, but she had big feet and such a lusty waist; I couldn't think of her. Lady Avon must have small feet

and a taper waist as well as a million dollars. Miss Racine was distractingly pretty, but much too fast. I liked her, by Jove, I did, but she won't do to marry. Let's see; are there any more? Yes. Miss Easton; quite pretty, very nice and rich; besides, her father is a congressman. Miss Easton will do, I guess. She wasn't engaged, but I can pretend I thought she was. If I remember right she was going to a female college; so it isn't likely she's married, as she hadn't graduated. I think I flirted with her a little. I guess that I can arrange it without any very elaborate explanations. Yes, I can get her all right." He touched the bell and his valet entered.

"Here, Adams, get some cold water and bathe my head, first thing, then some wine, my coffee, and attend to my toilet."

Adams slid about noiselessly, performing his duties as systematically as the clock ticks off the minutes; and in half an hour his master was bathed, combed, brushed and perfumed, and looked and felt as fresh as a dewdrop.

"Why, Sir Alfred, good-morning! I didn't expect to find you here," he said upon meeting his friend in the hall, when going to breakfast. "Have you breakfasted yet?"

"No. I thought you wouldn't beat me, so I came for you and am barely in time, I see. But—I—I—believe we made a rather foolish bet last night, and I just thought if you wanted to retract—"

"Certainly not, certainly not! I'm an Englishman and a man of honor. I will not retract unless you wish—"

"I? No, indeed. I was just thinking of you; you know your fortune is not so large as it was ten years ago."

"Very kind of you, Sir Alfred! to think of me, but your kindness is a little offensive; pardon me, I don't mean any offense."

"And I will take none," Sir Alfred answered, as his face settled into its habitual calm. "When had we better start on this wild goose chase?"

"You may call it a wild goose chase if you want to, but I assure you that I intend to have a whole lot of fun out of it. You see, the fair daughters of America will fairly swarm around; all we will have to do will be to open our arms and we can have our choice from dozens of them. So be consoled; there's no need of coming back without an heiress even if chance shouldn't favor you in time to win the bet."

Sir Alfred frowned and looked away. Somehow he disliked hearing the truth in such plain language.

"But you didn't say when we had better start."

"Next week, don't you think? This is the tenth; we want to get back for the opening, don't we?"

"Just as you say, my lord. I don't care much where I am when the season opens. I am getting so infernally tired of everything that I would like to go to sleep and sleep as long as old Rip did; then a man might get through the remainder of his life tolerably well."

"Sir Alfred, you should be more sensible. What has been can never be again; we should live right along with the times; this is a progressive age; I wouldn't miss one year of my life now for any

amount of money. We must take the world as it comes; it is certainly revolving faster now than it did one hundred years ago, and it may make the uninitiated a little dizzy, but you and I, who have been on the turf for forty years, ought to be making the most of every minute." Here they came to the club rooms, entered and ordered breakfast—breakfast at fifteen minutes of midday!

"Hello; there is our friend Kirby. He looks completely knocked up, and no wonder; the thing is getting very public. Poor fellow! I should sue for a divorce at once. Marriage is a failure anyway, but you and I are in for it; we have a name to perpetuate."

"Yes, my lord, I believe marriage is a failure."

CHAPTER III.

LORD GATES was sitting at his desk, reading and writing letters. He is a busy man always, and just now is particularly engaged in writing answers to a large pile of important letters. He is in no mood to be bothered. Sir Alfred, never busy himself, doesn't understand this, and informally enters, seats himself by the desk and waits for his father to look up. He waits a long time, but his presence seems unnoted by his father, who writes steadily on. At last, recalling an engagement which he must shortly fulfill, he begins:

"Father, I've made a d—d fool of myself." Lord

Gates kept right on writing, and finally, without raising his eyes, said:

"Very likely; I'm not in the least surprised. A man who has nothing useful to do, must employ himself some other way. I hope you'll be a successful one."

"Well, sir, it's no joking matter. I've made a devilish big bet and one that will leave my finances at a mighty low ebb; I've got a fifty thousand pound bet on hand." Lord Gates laid his pen down, pushed his chair back and sat looking at his son.

"You see, I was drunk."

"It isn't necessary to tell me that. You've been drunk before, but never quite so wild. How came you to get in for such a sum as that?"

"Lord Avon was worse off than I. He bet fifty pounds and I asked why he didn't wager a pair of cuffs. That nettled him and he raised it to fifty thousand, and I was just far enough gone to take it."

"Why don't you draw off?"

"I offered to let him, but he took it almost as an insult, so of course I couldn't, or wouldn't, rather."

"Well, what the thunder was it about?"

Sir Alfred cleared his throat, hemmed and hawed, blushed like a boy, and finally said:

"Why, you see, we got to talking about American women, or heiresses rather; how easily they can be caught by Englishmen, and we drank and talked until he bet he could go over and be engaged to an heiress before I could."

Here Lord Gates began to rub his hands and chuckle in apparent glee. Sir Alfred looked on in wonder, which finally changed to amazement. "What is so funny?" he finally succeeded in articulating.

"Now, Alfred, my boy; I've got you. You can't afford to lose that money; you'll have to win it, don't you see? You'll have to marry."

"I'm afraid I will, father, but I'll be so rushed that I may not be able to get such a wife as I could wish."

"I don't care a penny whether you get such a wife as you could wish or not. Haven't you been dallying around for fifteen years and I doing everything to help you on? Didn't I more than half propose to Lady Maud Peckham for you and then couldn't get you to do your part? Ten or fifteen years ago, I wanted to see you happy with some nice, sweet girl, but now I don't care what kind of a tartar you get. But you must marry; the name must be perpetuated; so you or I must marry."

"I would much rather, father, that you would."

"Of all strange men you are the strangest. You seem never to have been young or to have had a single ambition. You might have attained eminence, even the premiership. What under the sun makes you so indifferent?"

"I despise this political web of ours; I despise the methods that are used to gain power and prestige. I would scorn an office gained by intrigue. I'd rather be a drone than a knave."

"You are talking utter nonsense. The end justifies the means; a man should intrigue until he gets the position he wants, then he can throw off his mask, when, if he have a stout heart and a man's courage, he can hold his place. The ignorant and vulgar are eternally howling about corruption in politics. There

is no more corruption there than in business life, traffic and trade. That old cry is worn threadbare. We can't revolutionize the world; we can only have a principle and stand by it." Here Lord Gates brought his fist down with a crash.

"Father, I am sorry that I have disappointed you so. I am not happy in my inactivity, but I don't want to win honors that I can't glorify."

"Poorer men than you are occupying high positions."

"Well, father, if I marry and raise up a family to the good old name, you will forgive me, won't you?"

"You *must* marry; you can't afford to lose that money, and I won't promise to help you. I haven't any money to throw away; but I hope, after all, that you will get a decent sort of a wife. I think I would look for a woman rather than an heiress."

"But she must be rich or the bet is lost."

"Well, try to find the two qualities combined; a woman with money."

"I'm in earnest, father; I really intend to make a faithful search for a wife."

"Search! Great heavens, you talk as if the world were not full of women; and for that matter a man need never leave England. But I must waste no more time; when do you sail?"

"Next week," said Sir Alfred, as he left his father's presence.

CHAPTER IV.

"MY LORD, is everything ready? It's devilish early but we must be stirring if we are to get off," Sir Alfred said, upon entering his friend's apartments.

"Early! I should say so. Is the sun up, Adams?"

"Yes, my lord; it has been up two hours."

"Here, I believe my tie is not on straight. Take that raveling off my leg—button my glove and hand me my cigar case. Everything ready?"

"Yes, my lord, the luggage is at the pier and the carriage is waiting."

"Come, Sir Alfred, send your carriage home, and go with me. I don't believe any one knows we are going and they needn't find it out; we'll just lounge around and not go aboard until the last minute."

"I hope I shan't be seasick," his lordship said, a few moments later, as they stood on deck smoking.

"I was, the last time I crossed, and I felt so mean for three or four days that I wasn't fit for anything. It wouldn't do to be laid up this time and give you the start of me. Mercy, look at the sun; how high he is! I wonder when he rises. But it is so calm and fresh that I don't feel sleepy and I didn't get to bed very early last night either. Say, my friend, you've no idea how melancholy I'm feeling."

"Why, yes, I had noticed that you were rather quiet and preoccupied."

"I think you're a little sarcastic, old boy. The worse I feel, the more I talk, so I won't have to think, don't you see? But really I am in trouble."

"How?"

"Why, I went to see Cleonice last night, and really, the poor girl is perfectly distracted. I told her I was going to America and wanted to leave her a little cash, but no; she wouldn't have any. Said she would hire out—go on the stage—beg—starve, but not touch my money. She was morally certain I was going wife-hunting. Just think of it; a man can't cross the water without having that dinned into his ears, both here and in America. Well, she wouldn't take money, and she talked to me in a way that actually touched me."

"Pshaw! aren't you a little too conscientious?"

"I admit that I am. You see, I don't know whether I ever promised to marry her or not. I surely didn't, but she swears that I did, and actually wanted me to do so—positively and truly she did. Think of it! Me, an Avon, with only a sickly boy between me and an earldom! She also reminded me that I had seduced her. Now, I suppose that is true, but I do know that if the devil coaxed me into hell, I wouldn't admit to my God that I hadn't gone willingly. Well, she just heaped a mountain of reproaches on my head, and I couldn't say a word. There's too much fol-de-rol about women being betrayed. I think, sometimes, it's the men who are seduced. Well, the whole thing is a horrible bore. The woman has lots of jewelry and all the furniture, which I suppose she will sell when she has to; so I'm not going to worry about it any longer."

CHAPTER V.

SIR ALFRED was sauntering about the deck, thinking in a dreamy sort of way, what this trip might mean to him. Would he marry, and if so, would he be happy? Would he love? Would he find his ideal?

Sir Alfred Gates had had an ideal at one time in his life, but now he scarcely ever thought of her; never, except when the thought of marriage was forced upon him. To-day his mind reverted to the fantasy of his youth. She must be beautiful, yet wholly unconscious of that beauty; brilliant, yet innocent of being so; she must be all virtue, all truth, all love, all tenderness, perfectly happy in the love and home he would so gladly give her, and she must have no desire, no ambition for anything else—such a woman as it would surely be impossible to find, since Psyche first mirrored her pretty face in the water, or Eve felt the yearning to move in a larger sphere. But we hug a delusion until we find a reality more pleasing.

And his lordship was thinking, too; wondering when he would return to his native land, covered all over with glory and Uncle Sam's dollars.

* * * * *

"Land in sight! Land in sight!" some one yells, and the cry, "Home again, home again, to America!" arises. The great ship draws nearer, the towers of the city are plainly seen, the usual throng awaits on

shore, but not the same—never the same. The gang plank slides in place and the home-comers are soon lost among those waiting to receive them. But there was no reception for our Englishmen, and Lord Avon, drawing his friend aside, said:

“Now, Sir Alfred, hadn’t we better part here and each take his own way, or how?”

“Why, yes, I suppose it would be as well; I don’t know whether I will stay in New York or seek some of the more rural districts. But how shall we communicate? A letter’s too slow and a telegram is too public.”

“We’ll have to telegraph.”

“Yes; but the minute your charmer says ‘yes,’ must you rush pell-mell from her presence to send the news?”

“Guess so. The end justifies the means. But say, let’s make the provision that the money be not paid until the engagement ends in marriage.” His lordship was feeling a little guilty because of his advantage over his friend, who was unacquainted with the country and the people, while he was able to pursue definite plans.

“You know there was no provision made either way,” he continued.

“Why, if you wish it so.”

“I thought it might make it a little easier for the unfortunate one to give him a little time. Where will you be? You can wire me at S——. I will make arrangements to get information there.”

“I will be at the U—— for the present, and will notify you if I change location.”

So they separated. We will first follow Sir Alfred. He takes the train for a suburban locality, puts up at an exclusive hotel, adorns himself with a suit of a gayer sort than usual with him and goes forth in a mood half comic, half desperate, "to conquer or to fall."

It is seven o'clock in the evening. The most popular park in the place is beginning to show signs of life. There is to be some kind of an entertainment and the crowd is arriving early enough for a promenade before the music begins. Sir Alfred is walking leisurely around, looking out for a possible acquaintance, and the probable heiress, with all the qualities of his ideal. "Why won't this lady do?" and he stands and looks at a blonde head that is evidently unconscious of being scrutinized. What blonde hair, what a fair skin, such a pretty neck, and so exquisitely dressed! She must be rich and she certainly is young. He wonders how he can make her acquaintance in a careless way, and longs for her to drop her handkerchief or fan. But nothing offering itself, he decides upon a bold strike, and making his way to where she is sitting, says in his most winning way:

"Pardon me, madam, but haven't we met before?"

Madam looked at him frigidly and remarked that she didn't recall meeting him, and inquired his name.

"My name is Gates; my home is in England. I can't say where I've had the pleasure of meeting you, unless in London," he stammered.

"'Pon my word, is this Sir Alfred Gates? Ah,

don't you remember me; my name is Snib? Met you in London several years ago. This is my wife, Sir Alfred Gates," and Mr. Snib, the millionaire brewer, who had at that moment joined them, mopped his face and looked very proud of Mrs. Snib, number three.

Sir Alfred shook hands with the little woman and at the same time gave her a scrutinizing look. He hadn't noticed before that the fair skin was due to powder, but now he saw it, and also that the hair had been blondined. It flashed upon him suddenly that she was not pretty, only neat and stylish.

"I'm not sure that I remember you, for you know, so many Americans visit London, and yet I fancied I had seen your wife; perhaps that was the time."

"Oh, no, Sir Alfred; we were not married then," she said, shyly dropping her eyes, her coldness suddenly changing to coquetry. "How long are you going to be in America, and in town?"

"I hardly know."

"You will come to see us while you are here, won't you? Come to-morrow; we will send the carriage for you; you must come."

"Cora, this is Sir Alfred Gates, of London; this is my niece. Miss Dare, Sir Alfred," spoke Snib, as a young woman joined them.

Mrs. Snib continued: "You are going to stay for the music, of course; we are going to have a fine entertainment—first-class talent from somewhere, I can't think where. Ah, there is the music, now. Come with us, there are plenty of seats yet."

So our Englishman found himself a moment later

sitting by Mrs. Snib's niece, but he was sure as he compared the two that Miss Dare was the more attractive; that her pretty flaxen hair had not been blondined and that there was not a vestige of powder on her face. How small, fair and sweet she looked, sitting there by him and how anxiously he waited for Cupid's little dart to get in its work on him!

Cora Dare was visiting her aunt, and expecting to make her *début* as soon as the season opened. She was eighteen years old, fair and gentle and "accomplished," and was really quite charming. She cherished but one ambition, and that was to obtain a titled husband:—

"English, Irish, French or Spanish,
German, Italian, Dutch or Danish."

Sir Alfred, ignorant of this, anxiously improved every moment. He had no time for an extended courtship.

"I may come, may I not?" he said when the concert was over, and she bashfully replied, "Yes, I don't mind."

"I'll accept your kind invitation," Sir Alfred said to Mrs. Snib as he helped Miss Dare into the carriage.

Now he must ascertain her financial status. But here; doesn't he recognize this young fellow? Yes, surely this is Adolphus Snib, and so it proved; the next moment they were walking together, talking.

"I have just met your mother—or rather your father's wife."

"Yes, my step-step-mother, my father's third wife. I don't believe in mixing one's relationships

in such a way; besides, a man of his age has no business to marry such a young woman, when he has children of his own."

"Why, your father isn't such an old man; I don't believe him to be ten years older than myself."

"Well, you're no spring chicken, Sir Alfred."

"Now, Snib, don't try to get any of your Americanisms off on me," Sir Alfred said jocularly, trying to establish a familiarity that would warrant the questions he wished to ask concerning Miss Dare.

"That Miss Dare, too—a charming girl! Let me see—where is she from? I believe she told me, but I have forgotten."

"San Francisco."

"Yes, yes; that's it. Her father has an interest in coal mines?"

"Miss Dare doesn't happen to have a father; he died five years ago," replied young Snib, eying his companion suspiciously.

"Oh, then I made a mistake, but I thought she spoke of coal mines."

"I will have to leave you here, Sir Alfred. I have an engagement. Here is my card; call and see me. I've rooms at the L——; good-evening." And he was gone, leaving Sir Alfred in a "confusion-worse-confounded" state of mind.

CHAPTER VI.

"ANOTHER caller, sir."

Our congressman took the card, stared at it a moment and said, "Show him in, Sam," and the next moment he and Lord Avon were shaking hands and expressing unbounded pleasure at seeing each other.

"Here, have this chair. Mercy! how hot it is, and you drove from town in this heat! Why didn't you wait till evening? It always begins to cool off about six o'clock."

"Wait until evening! My dear friend, you've no idea what brought me here if you thought I might have waited until evening."

"Why, my lord, I flattered myself that you came to see me, but to tell the truth, I'm surprised. I didn't think you London boys ever lost yourselves so far out in the country."

"My dear Congressman Easton, I have been pinning away to get lost out here, and had it not been for a misunderstanding, would have been here long ago."

"I don't understand you."

"Probably not, but I will explain. A year ago this summer, when you were in London, I met your daughter and was much impressed with her, but I understood from young Snib—you remember him, he was with your party—that she was to be married, and while he didn't say it right out, I fancied that he was the happy man. But about ten days ago I saw a Saratoga paper, and looking it through, I ran across

an account of your returning with your son and daughter to your country seat, preparatory to your children starting away to school in September. I knew then that it was a mistake about her approaching marriage and sailed on the very next ship, and here I am, to ask the hand of your daughter in marriage."

"You say that Snib led you to believe that my daughter was to be married?"

"Yes, in an indirect way. I hope I'm not too late, sir; I hope that his confounded chatter hasn't ruined my happiness?" said his lordship in a tone of despair.

"Oh, no; but excuse me if I question you a little. You think Snib wanted a chance?"

"Yes."

"And could you see that she showed him any preference?"

His lordship was becoming bewildered; he couldn't see the point, though he knew there was one to all this parley, and decided to take a neutral position. The truth was, our congressman didn't want his daughter to marry the Englishman, but any one was preferable to Snibs.

"I'm sure I can't say, sir; I was too knocked up to notice anything, though I fancied she did prefer him; but that might have been a trick of the imagination. I hope, sir, that I have your consent to address your daughter?"

"Well, I will go and send her to you and it will be as she says, but she must go to school another year; even then she will be young to marry."

"O, don't discourage me by such a provision as that, but of course I will abide by your wishes," and then followed a murmur about "blessed privilege," "sacred promise," and so forth.

A few moments later sweet, bashful Agnes Easton came into the presence of Lord Avon. She had no idea whether she wished to marry him or any one else, yet when she went back to her room she wore a betrothal ring, and a few minutes later his lordship managed to send a telegram which read:

"I'm the most fortunate man on earth. Congratulate me."

CHAPTER VII.

MRS. SNIB couldn't contain herself. "I do hope, Nannie," she said to a servant, "that everything will go off smooth without any clashing or any mistakes."

"I think everything 'ull be all right," Nannie replied, "but what is the man's name who is to be here?"

"Sir Alfred Danville—or was it Damson—oh, anyway he's an English nobleman."

"What business does he follow?"

"Oh, dear, he doesn't do anything; he's a man of leisure, a titled man."

"But sometimes gentlemen work, you know. Mr. Snib, for instance," Nannie persisted, but keeping her face turned from Mrs. Snib.

"Oh, well, things are so different here from what

they are in England; you can tell a gentleman there without asking any questions, but here—oh, dear me—I'd so much rather live there," and with this Mrs. Snib betook herself to the parlor.

"Do, Auntie; let's put Venus in some corner," Cora said, turning from the piano.

"Why, dear?"

"Oh, she does look so naked."

"That is very artistic, dear, and you should cultivate a taste for such. I don't think it looks so bad for her to be naked as to have only one arm. She's a deformed looking thing, but then it's artistic. What had we better do this evening to pass the time?"

"Maybe he plays high five or whist?"

"Oh, I expect he plays baccarat; I do wish we knew how."

"But isn't that gambling, Auntie?"

"It don't make any difference if it is. It's all the rage in London, anyway, and I would give anything to know how to play it."

At the appointed time, Sir Alfred presented himself at the Snibs' residence. He was met by Mrs. Snib, who was profusely dressed and mannered, and hailed by Snib familiarly. His heart sank, but when Cora in white silk and pearls entered the room his misgivings vanished. He greeted her warmly and decided to settle matters at the first opportunity. Finding it difficult to keep the tortured conversation going, Cora was asked and entreated to favor them with some music. She consented bashfully and shied quickly past Venus as she took her place at the piano.

Now, this piano was a gorgeous affair, made of the finest woods of some half-dozen different shades, and the polished surfaces were adorned with pictures by great artists. It had cost an immense amount of money and the Snibs were justly proud of it.

"What an elegant piece of workmanship!" Sir Alfred said while Cora sang.

"Yes, we had the work done in the old country. Cora will have it when she marries."

"Your gift to her—or is it from her father?"

"Oh, from us. Her father died while she was at school before he knew of her great musical ability. He would have gotten it for her, no doubt, for he was very rich," Snib remarked.

"She will make her *début* here in a few weeks, just as soon as she comes of age," Mrs. Snib said in a half whisper. "I do hope you will be here then."

While this was just what Sir Alfred wanted to know, it almost sickened him to have it so unreservedly proclaimed and he rather abruptly asked:

"Do you like the old country?"

"Yes, indeed. I've always wanted to go there. I would really like to go there to live."

"You certainly show excellent judgment, Mrs. Snib."

"Society is so different."

"How?"

"Oh, every way; but in one way especially; people are not taken into society so indiscriminately as they are here; everybody knows his place and keeps it. And England has had so many great men—like Lord Lytton and Sir Charles Dickens." Sir Alfred's

gravity was taxed and he was heartily glad to hear Mrs. Snib begin to talk of the song Cora had just finished. "Do you like that song, Sir Alfred?"

"Yes, it's the first time I've heard it; it's very pretty."

"Never heard 'After the Ball?' Why, it's been the rage all summer. But don't you know there are some people who make fun of it. I think it's lovely, such pure, sweet sentiment, and it's so true. Just ask Mr. Snib how he likes baching."

"Please don't remind me of my bachelorhood, Mrs. Snib," said Sir Alfred, and turning to Mr. Snib, he said something half in fun, half in earnest, about the unmarried man.

"Oh, yes, indeed. I tell you there's nothing like having a wife to—to—look—er—that is to look—to be looked after," Snib stammered.

Here they all laughed and Snib left the room for something. Mrs. Snib, wanting to leave Sir Alfred and Cora alone, excused herself and withdrew, but she returned almost immediately with a very significant looking envelope, which she handed to Sir Alfred.

"I hope there is no bad news," Mrs. Snib ventured when he had cast his eyes over the message. He looked from Mrs. Snib to Cora, and scarcely repressed a sigh of relief. He'd lost the bet and d—d if he cared; now he'd not marry until he chose.

"Not exactly bad news, but business will necessitate my immediate return to England," he exclaimed.

"Oh, that's too bad, we're so sorry," the women exclaimed, while Snib enquired if the matter couldn't

be fixed up without his going back. When he departed he left two very much disappointed females and Snib quite upset.

CHAPTER VIII.

Two days later our congressman was seated in his library employed in smoking and sweating, when the family carriage drove up and a young man of about twenty-one years of age sprang out, came up the marble walk with a quick, elastic step, and directly into our congressman's presence, with a very-much-at-home air.

"Hello, my son," the father said—for such was the relationship, "did you have a good time?" extending his left hand—he was holding his cigar with his right—and pushing him a chair with his foot.

Joe Easton touched the extended hand coldly and stood staring at his illustrious parent with a very disgusted look upon his bright, boyish face.

"Well, now, what's the matter with you? Why don't you sit down?"

"What's the matter with you, I should like to know?"

"Now, Joe, just sit down and tell me what you're driving at."

"Harris tells me that Agnes is going to marry that Englishman, Lord Avon, with your consent."

"And how does that concern you, if she is?"

"Why, I'm in the family, and it does concern me—and yourself—vitally."

"How? I thought you and he were great friends, last year in London."

"I haven't anything special against him; he's jolly and a good fellow to be around with; but he's a titled Englishman and you ought to know their trade."

"Well, I don't. Maybe you will enlighten me."

"Fishing for suckers like you and Agnes."

"Look here, Joe, you've gone far enough. I won't have any more of your impertinence; if you've anything to say, say it."

"Why, he has the honors of a broken down family to support, and he's struck America for a rich wife. He's broke and has come here to make a stake."

"Oh, pshaw! I believe the fellow is all right."

"Well, I know what I'm talking about. I know that he's gambled half a dozen fortunes away."

"How do you know?"

"Why, Adolphus Snib knows it to be a fact. He's been to London five or six times, is pretty well acquainted there, goes into society and knows a thing or two."

"I should say he does know a thing or two; he's the fastest young devil in Washington, and I wish you'd keep away from him; but the Englishman I believe is all right. I've seen him in a few quiet games of draw, seen him both win and lose, and I'll swear it did me good to see him hand over the money when he lost, jovial as could be. Some great man has said, 'If you are a beggar spend your last dollar like a prince,' and he would fork over his last with as much spirit as if taking some other man's. There's

something in that. I despise a man who will cringe and cower before anything."

"Of course he lives like a prince and plays the perfection of recklessness, if that's all that's necessary," Joe returned contemptuously.

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way; I was just saying I admired his spirit. But I can't understand why this man who is thought to be so wealthy should come over here to marry for money. There are plenty of rich women in England."

"There is just where you're off. There are very few wealthy women among the aristocracy. The money goes with the title and the title goes to the oldest son or the nearest male relative and the women have only annuities, while American girls share equally with their brothers. Why, it shows on the face of the thing that he had an object, or why should he rush over here without the least warning?"

"Well, I don't know, Joe; there may be something in what you say, and yet I can't believe it. I will go and see this young Snib, though I've no confidence in him; he's too much like his father. But I don't care for Snib's lies; he can't hurt me now; his brother will never get the nomination again—I wish he would, rather than the man they are going to run. 'Twas Snib's money that pulled his brother through the last convention."

"Yes, and you'll need all you've got before you get through this campaign, and that's what made me anxious about this affair with the Englishman. By the time you have paid off a few of his bets you'll not have enough left to elect you justice of the peace."

“Well, Joe, you see I’ve given my word and I don’t know what we can do about it. I thought it would be very easy for her to do worse. What can we do? I wish you would find out how Agnes feels—slyly, of course.” Our congressman was now thoroughly aroused. He had represented his district for ten years, but his last election had been pretty close and it was costing more every time. He had always been a little suspicious of English titles, but when brought face to face with the bearer of one and it seemed so like an ordinary human being, his doubts fell asleep and our great, wise, shrewd congressman was taken in.

“I think I would run the risk of her doing worse,” Joe said as he picked up his hat to leave.

“I can depend on you, Joe, if necessary?”

“Certainly.”

“And you will find how Agnes feels and report?”

“Yes.”

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN he went in search of Agnes he found her practicing. (Why will women always practice and never play?)

“Hello, Aggie, strumming away with the patience of an angel! Don’t you ever get tired?”

“Oh, Joe, you’ve come at last! I’ve been so lonesome and blue. Aunt Kate has been keeping me on a diet of oatmeal and scalded milk. I’ll be glad if

the time ever comes when I can eat what I choose and when I choose. Did you get many fish?"

"You shouldn't be blue; you've had company, I've heard. Yes, I got a few fish, but none so large probably as the one you caught."

"I suppose you have heard that Lord Avon has been here?" Agnes said timidly.

"Oh, yes, I've heard that long ago. Does his lordship perfume himself as copiously as he used to? Is his mustache as handsome? Of course he is just as fond of it as ever. Remarkably fine fellow, isn't he?"

"Yes, I suppose so; I didn't take particular notice."

"You had the best chance in the world, it seems."

"Well, I don't know anything about it, anyway. But what a cold you've caught sleeping in the tent."

"Oh, come off, you can't fake any longer," Joe said, drawing in his feelers and making a straight plunge. - "You are going to marry that fellow?"

"Yes," Agnes answered, and began playing and singing:

"Just as I am without one plea."

"And just as he is, I suppose, debts and all," said Joe.

Agnes made no reply and Joe's anger began to get the better of his tact. "It would be a monster speculation for some one to have a shipload of titles imported; the market would be bulled in twenty-four hours."

"It's none of your affairs anyway," said Agnes. "I'm not particular whom I marry. I'd just as soon

live in England as in America; women can't vote here any more than they can there, nor hold office."

"Of course not," retorted Joe. "She's not capable of wielding the ballot or holding office. She would hop up out of the Senate and rush off to England the first time a curly headed milksop, like Lord Avon, came over here and said, 'Come to my arms.'"

"Now you just shut up, Joe Easton. I'll tell papa on you. It's a pity you can't refrain from teasing me when you've been away for three weeks and I've been at home on oatmeal and scalded milk."

"It's a little tough on you, I know, but I wouldn't submit to oatmeal and milk; and I wouldn't have obliged the Englishman when it hasn't been three years since a nice fellow like George Sanderson was sent about his business."

"But we were both so young, and besides, he drank."

"Well, pardon me if I say that you were as large then as now and had better sense. Drank, did he? Well, about the first time your Englishman comes home on a lordly drunk, you'll think a plain American jag isn't a comparison. And George doesn't drink now."

"How do you know?" Agnes asked quickly.

"Well, I do know," Joe said, as he lighted a cigar and began to puff away in the most provoking manner.

"Let's sing a song, Joe."

"All right. What shall it be?"

"After the Ball?"

"After the Ball! No, something with a little sense. 'Over the Garden Wall' is pretty."

"Well, I should like to know which is the softer if you are going to compare them," Agnes said decidedly.

"That's the truth, Agnes, but 'Over the Garden Wall' has a pretty tune. That reminds me of a little poem I read a few days ago. I cut it out; here it is; I'll read it to you.

THE QUARTETTE ANTHEM.

"O, yes, I heerd the anthem sung by thet big church quartette;

My wife she raved about it, but I kep' my own mouth shet;

'No sweeter song,' she said, 'is sung by angel lip;'

An' I sot still and heerd her talk, an' never raised a yip.

"The absence of ideas was drowned in plenteousness of voice.

What strict economy of words, an' extravagance of noise!

For they were stingy of their words an' generous of their strains,

An' they were spendthrifts of their lungs an' misers of their brains.

"An' they call this mighty music; 'taint for me to say it's not;

But I think music's better when it's slightly mixed with thought;

I think your lungs give forth a more inspirin' strain
If they first have made connection with the ingine of your brain."

"Good sound sense in that, Agnes. I tell you I've no patience with this wordless, brainless music that public singers affect to-day. But you may stay and sing what you choose; I'm going out in the shade

to go to sleep. Had a splendid time, but am about used up. Saw some old acquaintances, but no one you'd be interested in now," and with this Joe sauntered away, leaving poor Agnes very much disturbed. She left the piano and went to the window, then back to the piano, and to the hall, where she stood watching the receding form of her brother, but feeling her loneliness insufferable, in a few minutes followed him.

"Here, Joe, are some fine apples," she said as she sat down on the grass close by the hammock that Joe was lounging in.

"Yes, I believe I'll have a couple."

"I wish I could have gone with you. Boys always have a better time than girls; they can go everywhere and do every and anything."

"Well, you see girls ain't built that way."

"Now, I'll go right in the house, if you don't hush talking so."

"Well, go; I'm not dying for your society."

"Oh, Joe; and I'm going away to school day after to-morrow."

"So soon, Agnes?" and Joe sat straight up.

"Yes, school opens on the seventh, and this is the fifth."

"I don't go for ten days yet, and I didn't think of your going so soon. Talk away; I'll answer."

"Well, who did you see when you were away? Frank Farley?"

"No."

"Jaspar Godwin?"

"No."

"Who then?"

"George Sanderson, for one."

Agnes' heart beat strangely, but she tried to disguise her interest.

"He gave me his picture; would you like to see it?"

"Yes, sometime when it won't bother you too much."

"All right, sometime then."

"Where does he live now?"

"Wherever his hat's off. He's a temperance lecturer."

"A temperance lecturer!" Agnes echoed.

"Yes. After he left here he drifted around for a while, finally turning up at his uncle's, who sent him away to be treated for inebriety and then to school for a couple of years. Then George entered the lecture field and has been lecturing ever since. He asked all about you; if you were married or had prospects of that sort. I wanted to bring him home with me and he wanted to come, but he had appointments for the next three weeks and I told him that we would both leave for school inside of that time."

"Did you hear him lecture?"

"No. He spoke the first night we were camping. We slept in the tent but took our meals at the hotel, and while I was eating breakfast the next morning he came in." Joe watched Agnes as he talked, and fancied her remembrance of George boded ill for the Englishman.

"Well, I must go in, Agnes. I haven't unpacked my grip yet."

"Shan't I help you?" she said, getting up as he did.

"I don't need you particularly;" and then as he looked into the pretty, childish face, so troubled and sweet, his heart smote him.

"Yes, come along. Maybe you can help me; I think there are some buttons off that you might fix."

Agnes didn't wait for a second invitation, but grabbed hold of Joe's natty coat and walked along by his side. Upon reaching the room Joe unlocked a leathern grip and she began with trembling fingers to take out garment after garment. She saw no picture and wanted to ask about it, but couldn't bring herself to do so.

"Is this all, Joe?" she asked. "Where do you want the buttons?"

"Here, on this coat—and here is the picture." He tossed it on the bed, and seeing how her face paled, in kindness turned away and busied himself at the washstand.

"Let me take the coat to my room, Joe; the light is better there than here," and with a very sober face, Agnes sought her own room.

CHAPTER X.

THE Young Ladies' Seminary in the town of L—— is a large brick structure. A commodious boarding hall stands at its left and both buildings are surrounded by a prettily arranged but somewhat limited campus.

It is the fourteenth of September. The little, cautious matron was engaged in some overseeing of servants, when she was summoned to the reception room. Hastily smoothing her hair, ruffling her bangs and donning her professional countenance, she passed into the parlor.

A tall girl in a jaunty traveling dress arose and came toward her. "My name is Helen Herman," the young woman said in an unabashed, natural way, "and I came to see about admission to the school."

"The school is full and the dormitory nearly so; we might make arrangements for one more. I see no reason why you should not be admitted to the school, supposing you to be of good character, of course." Here the matron stopped as if she had asked a question and she really did expect some kind of assurance.

"I guess my character is ordinarily good," the new-comer said with a half sarcastic smile.

"What do you mean by 'ordinarily good?'" the cautious little matron said, as she stepped back.

"Why, that I am as good as the ordinary woman of to-day. I have plenty of money and consequently am not tempted to steal. I have always gone to school; have associated very little with men, so I suppose would not be considered fast."

"But have you no letter from your parents or guardian?"

"My parents are dead. I never had a guardian except my nurse, who died about two years ago; there are trustees who manage the estate; but I am my own architect; I make and execute my own laws."

"Have you any relatives? Are you utterly alone in the world?"

"Yes."

"How sensible of you to come here! Most girls would have rushed off to a mixed school and placed themselves in imminent danger. So young and friendless and pretty, too, I think, if you had your veil off."

"I am in my twentieth year."

"Yes, very young, as I said."

"I admit that generally speaking it is young," Helen said crisply.

"I don't quite understand."

"Well, no matter." Helen turned away and looked at some blooming plants on a stand beside her.

"I will go and see about a room for you. Nearly all of the rooms have two occupants. Miss Easton, a congressman's daughter, has no one with her. Do you think that you would like to room with her; she is a very sweet, nice girl?"

"Yes, anywhere."

"I will go at once."

"But wait. There is a consideration that must be mentioned. I see by this catalogue that the students are not allowed to take lessons outside of the seminary."

"That is one of the rules, but I can see no reason why any one should wish to do so. We furnish the best teachers in every branch—music, French, German, Italian, and everything that a finished lady requires."

"But voice training, reading, speaking and acting."

"We have a good elocutionist."

"That won't do. I mean some one who teaches acting—fits one for the stage."

"We have no instruction of that sort; we do not turn out actresses, but educate and finish girls for society."

"That is what I thought. But within a hundred miles of here there is a man who does such work, and I came here thinking that I could attend my books through the week and leave here on Friday afternoon at three o'clock, and get there in time to take a lesson that evening. Then I could easily take two more next day before the return train."

"I don't think it will be permitted. However, if you desire, I will lay the proposition before the faculty."

"Do so, please, and say that if I am not accorded this privilege I will not remain."

The matron left the room for some moments, and returning, bade the new girl meet the faculty in the reception room immediately after dinner.

Helen presented herself at the appointed time before a staff that consisted of a dozen women of various types and ages. She sat down in the nearest chair and waited to be questioned. With hat, veil and ulster removed, she presented a striking picture. She was tall, athletic; with a fine forehead, large expressive gray eyes, a straight nose and mouth, not of the rosebud sort, but indicative of a strong character. Her complexion, too, was one that no amount of bicycle riding could render less delicate and blooming. She was not pretty, nor yet beautiful, but she excited admiration. The monotony of life

seemed broken when in the presence of this thoughtful, original girl; and it seemed impossible, ridiculous, to urge conformity on one so independent and irrepressible.

"We understand, Miss Herman, that you are desirous of entering our school, but conditionally. You wish to be permitted to go to M—— for lessons in histrionism."

"Yes."

"It is against the rules." The principal, a masculine looking woman, acted as spokesman, and as she said this she removed her glasses and looked intently at Helen.

"Yes, I was so informed by the matron, but that is the only condition upon which I will enter this or any other school. I want to take the regular course, but I also expect to take training in my special line."

"Is it your intention to choose the stage as your regular profession?"

"I have already done so."

"From necessity or choice?"

"From choice."

"I do not approve of your ambition, but—don't you think you might be persuaded to abandon your intention?"

"I am very sure that I cannot be persuaded to give up something I want—something there is no plausible reason for giving up."

"How old are you?"

"I'll be twenty my next birthday." Helen answered all questions respectfully, yet with an undertone of quiet determination. The sharp-faced,

masculine woman saw it useless to argue further, and for a moment was carried back to the days of her own youth, when she too had cherished ambitions. "Life has just so many storms, anyway," she thought. "Why cramp the bud that is trying to open; why not let it blossom and rear its head if it will, just as we allow a quiet, modest one to droop and cling?" Then she spoke. "Well, Miss Herman, I have nothing further to say. I think if the faculty will express itself, we may come to an understanding." So saying, she turned to the long row; but nothing was offered. Miss Vance was their oracle, and things went as she said.

"Has any one anything to say?" she asked.

"I think if our principal agrees to the young lady's proposition, we have no objections to offer," some one in the row replied.

So that was settled and the room question, too, and the new pupil was shown quarters with Agnes Easton, our congressman's daughter.

CHAPTER XI.

THE matron escorted Helen to her room. "Miss Herman, this is your room-mate, Miss Easton," and Helen, who gloried in health and spirits, saw before her, half reclining in a chair, the small, fragile form of Agnes, with her fair hair falling in soft masses about her sweet face, her head bound in a white cloth which she constantly wet from a bowl of ice-water.

"Poor child, does your head still ache?" the ma-

tron asked kindly, then turning to Helen said: "Miss Easton is subject to nervous headache and at such times cannot endure noise."

Now, to Helen, this fair girl, suffering with the headache, looked almost contemptible, and a smile indicative of this feeling unconsciously settled upon her face, which made the timid Agnes think her repulsive.

"Certainly, I shall be as quiet as possible, since Miss Easton is kind enough to share her room with a stranger, but I am so strong and healthy myself that I haven't much patience with people who are afflicted with headaches and hysterical attacks."

The matron stared at her in undisguised astonishment, too astounded to speak. Helen stepped into the hall, took hold of her large Saratoga trunk, and with scarcely an effort dragged it into the room and proceeded to unstrap it.

"We keep a man for such work, and I will send him up if you will wait a minute," said the matron.

"I am my own man," Helen said, smiling, as she grasped the second strap firmly with her white, shapely, but strong hands and unbuckled it quickly. "But my wheel is at the station and I would like to have it brought, or be allowed to go for it. What hours do we have for recreation?"

"We have forty minutes in the morning in the gymnasium and an hour after supper to walk or ride. You may go for your bicycle; a number of the girls have them and others are going to get them," the matron replied and then left the room.

Agnes sat watching this independent, and to her,

almost miraculous young woman, unpacking her trunk, but no words were spoken. Helen was not so indifferent as she seemed, for occasionally she cast sly glances at the big chair and was secretly forming an estimate of its occupant, mentally soliloquizing.

“What does she read, what does she talk about? I wonder if she is bright and interesting or as soft and insipid as she looks—a figure-head at home, at school, and in society. I shan’t like her, I know; such a face is well enough on a girl baby, but not on a girl of seventeen or eighteen, especially in this day and age, when women are taking their stand shoulder to shoulder with men, mentally and physically; besides, she has nervous headache, and I can’t endure nervous people. Such as she, are of no consequence in this world, or the next either, for that matter.”

And Agnes, though awestruck, was anything but pleased with the prospects of association with such a creature. But they were both women and young, and propinquity means more than affinity nine times out of ten; so they gradually grew friendly enough to talk, though in a cold, indifferent way.

CHAPTER XII.

ONE evening, a few weeks later, Helen and Agnes had entered, with more warmth than usual, into their conversation.

“I tell you,” Helen said, “that I have a supreme contempt for three-fourths of the women. I don’t say so before men, but I do believe it’s the truth that

men have better sense than women. Women are always running after style, and the more disgusting it is, the better they like it. One season it is big hats and the next but the barest suggestion of head-gear; one year it's voluminous sleeves and the next they're tight as the skin. We drag our skirts in the mud, daub our faces, pencil our eyebrows, and color our lips. We say limb when we mean leg; we try to look indignant when a man has addressed us in an offensive manner. Bah! I despise the weakness of my sex. I despise the woman who brings suit for a breach of promise and admits she has been wheedled out of her virtue, as the world chooses to call it; but one thing sure, it is something she surrenders willingly and without question to the first invader."

"And I think we ought not to lay so much stress on these surface faults; we ought to look deeper for the spring that flows from the heart. These faults that you mention are only weaknesses of the human nature; it is only the poor blighted flower that tries to look as beautiful as its neighbor. It is natural for women to desire beauty, and it is right. We don't like a careless, slatternly woman who pays no attention to her dress or hair, or any one who outrages all the laws of society and embarrasses everybody with her eccentricities. Why don't you wear the old short-waisted, flowing-sleeve dresses; why don't you let your hair hang down your back in curls and wear shaker bonnets?"

"Why, such a dress would be neither pretty nor sensible."

"Certainly not, nor does your fair face need pow-

der, nor your hair the curling iron. And did it ever occur to you that you wear your hair in just the way it is most becoming, and that your dresses, a trifle short, display a neat arched foot and a well turned ankle?"

"Just exactly! you are no more charitable than I am. Because my dresses are short for convenience, you say it is to show a good foot; if I wore them long enough to sweep the ground you would say that I wanted to hide an ugly foot."

"No, I didn't say that either; but, candidly, if you had big, ugly feet and awkward ankles, would you wear your skirts so short?"

Helen stammered and blushed at this good-natured but pointed question.

"I am sure I don't know," she finally said. "I don't see why any woman should have ugly feet if she wears neat-fitting shoes, neither too large nor too small. I think women are running big shoes as much to the extreme as they ever did the small ones."

"Well, Miss Herman, I know this: that we can see the mote in our neighbor's eye when we can't see the beam in our own. Don't tell me that you are utterly indifferent to the beauty and brilliancy of your eyes, or the curl of that mobile lip—now, just now," said Agnes, catching a hand mirror from the dresser and holding it up to Helen's face, "nor of your hair that scorns the curling iron."

"But why don't women pay more attention to their mental faculties and depend more upon the impression made by the mind instead of that made by the dress and face?"

"Why, there has never been a time when women read and thought and studied as they do to-day."

"I know that, and I know, too, that there has never been a time when women affected so much as they do to-day. We are not natural; we only affect to be natural. We don't laugh; we only simper and giggle."

"And aren't you disgusted with the woman whose laugh is loud and coarse, and who pitches her voice way up in G for common conversation?"

"Isn't that affectation; isn't the loud, coarse laugh affected often?"

"I think a loud voice is very natural with some people."

"Not with well-bred people," Helen said.

"So then you admit that people need a little culture?"

"Oh, let up." Helen saw that she was partly vanquished and her astonishment was unbounded; this shy, quiet girl had a few ideas, whether her face indicated it or not. "Of course. I suppose nearly all of us need training; but oughtn't the pine grow straight without being propped. The bird flies straight without lessons; so should man or woman grow honorable, pure and noble without training."

Agnes was trying to think of an answer, when there was a knock at the door and a letter was handed in for her. She looked at the address and knew it was not from home; she looked at the postmark, that, too, was strange; and wondering who in the world it was from, opened it and read:

“EVER REMEMBERED FRIEND:—

“I suspected that our correspondence was broken off by others than yourself, and Joe’s conversation verified my belief. Of course he has told you something of our meeting and probably something of our talk and what I am now doing. Although I had but a short talk with him, I learned that you were still ‘heart-whole and fancy free,’ and I believe he would still be our friend and confidant.

“Dear little Agnes, I have thought of nothing else these three weeks but a renewal of the relation we once sustained. We were young then and perhaps a little foolish, but our love was sincere; and I would give worlds to know myself still the object of your love.

“I will be without appointments a few days next week and will take the liberty to come to see you, when I hope to be given, if not an assurance of your love, at least your consent to my winning it.

“As ever,

GEO. SANDERSON.”

While Agnes was reading, Helen was doing some troubled thinking. Was it true, as Agnes had said, that her indifference to personal beauty and attractive power was simply because she possessed such without thought or effort? Her very unconsciousness grew out of an inborn consciousness. She needed not to pick her words or guard her acts; she could rush boldly in and conquer without a thought. She had been elected president of the girls’ society by a unanimous vote and could dictate among the girls without question. “It’s magnetism,” she said to herself, “it’s magnetism; I always believed in magnetism. I always knew I could act in almost any society unquestioned. It’s not beauty, for Cleonice Dupont is better looking than I, and the girls don’t like her

and she doesn't like them, but she likes me." Here she looked up, and seeing Agnes in tears, kindly left the room.

She walked out on the broad stone walk and on, and on; she would go on walking anywhere to be alone to think. Again and again she stopped in doubt and perplexity; she felt almost disgusted with herself. Could it be that she was selfish, careless of other people's feelings? No, she knew better; she, with her high resolves and noble ideas; she was only schooling herself for a more useful position, a higher place than chairman of a girls' society.

The sun sank and still she strolled on with eyes staring far, far away, and mind and heart still farther away. This strange girl, who was only nineteen years old, but truly and honestly wanted to be thirty or more, not because she wanted to look old, or feel old, but that she might know more; she had crowded all the knowledge possible into her brief life and was still thirsting for more.

CHAPTER XIII.

HELEN had been in school about three weeks when it came her turn to conduct morning devotionals. She declined in a very quiet but determined manner.

Instantly every eye was upon her. Some looked placidly indifferent; others, shocked; poor Agnes embarrassed, but a dark, handsome girl across the aisle smiled her approval.

The difficulty was overcome immediately by the next girl in the order of rotation being called. She responded promptly and prayed for those who were lukewarm, those who were timid and thoughtless, and those who were out of the fold. She made a very nice prayer; that is, she chose nice words; her tone was neither too loud nor too soft; she kept them kneeling just the proper length of time. All except Helen and Cleonice Dupont rose feeling satisfied with themselves, comforted by the knowledge that a Christian duty had been performed. The row of bowed heads disgusted Helen, and to think that she was conforming in even the matter of attitude made her feel herself the most contemptible of all.

That evening Agnes embraced the very first opportunity to ask Helen's reason for her strange act.

"Why, I think it was said much better than I could have done."

"That is neither here nor there. All of the girls lead when their turn comes and it was your turn."

"Well, I don't believe in praying by turns any more than I believe in bathing by turns; suppose I bathe to-day and you to-morrow and Cleonice the next day and so on."

"That is quite a different thing."

"But praying by turns and at stated times is quite as ridiculous to me. Pretty soon we'll have nickel-in-the-slot prayers."

"I'm shocked."

"So am I," Helen answered provokingly.

"I mean, I am shocked at you."

"And I'm shocked at other people; the lack of sin-

cerity in everything. Pray with the mouth, bow the knee as the clock ticks out the regular time for doing so. You can't understand how I look upon it or how I feel toward such form and system in religion."

"But custom has made some things.

"Custom hasn't made me, thank heaven."

"But don't you believe in prayer?" Agnes asked in despair.

"Not those that are premeditated and seasoned to the taste, and then at the right moment allowed to glide slowly and prettily over the lips."

"Suppose some evening in the society, you told those, and only those who had prayer in their hearts, to kneel and pray quietly at their chairs, how many do you suppose would do so, even if some were in the mood to pray?"

"None probably."

"Then if people won't pray when they do feel like it, is it worse to do so when they don't feel like it than to abstain altogether?"

"You forget that we can pray without kneeling; the Lord has commanded us to pray in our closets, that is, in secret, and not to sound a trumpet before us when we do alms, and a number of other things that we don't care to heed."

"And He also said, 'He that is without sin cast the first stone.' I think about people as the sculptor did about the piece of marble, that there was an angel in it. I think we all have our angel side, even you, Helen, who try to do everything unnaturally or in an odd way. You are the queerest girl, Miss Herman. What does make you so?"

"Well, you see I was 'brought up by hand.' I have been an orphan since I was a year old; I always had my own way, pretty much, both at home and at school. You see, you've been dieted and trained up while I, like Topsy, have 'just growed'; consequently I am strong and healthy and spirited. I would just defy any man of my size to endure more than I. But you have a lame back and a head not much better."

"No, Miss Herman, there is just no use talking; you are naturally stronger. I wouldn't dare do such things as you do. Why, it would give me a fearful cold to sleep in a draught, and the way you get your feet wet would just kill me, I know it would. I have the headache an awful lot, oftener than I used to; I don't think I'm as strong as I was once," Agnes said wearily, taking a pillow from the bed and putting it behind her head. Then she opened a textbook and began studying.

Helen stood watching her a moment and then turned and left the room.

A few moments later she knocked at a door across the hall, which was immediately opened by Cleonice Dupont, a tall, handsome, but fierce looking woman. "Oh, Miss Herman, I am so glad to see you; my room-mate is calling and I am alone. I have been trying all day to get a chance to tell you how glad I am to see one girl anywhere who has the nerve to be independent; it does take nerve, I know. I couldn't do what you did, but I just wanted to say 'amen' when you said so politely, 'I beg to be excused.' I liked you the moment I saw you; so magnificently independent. I can guess your politics, I warrant."

"Well, try."

"You are an anarchist."

"Why, anarchists are not politicians. They argue with revolver and dynamite instead of brains. No, I'm not an anarchist."

"Well, you are a Populist; that's the next thing."

"Populist or Democrat, it's all the same; they advocate the same principles."

"Well, Democrat, Populist or anarchist; I like you and always have since I have known you, and you have arisen greatly in my estimation since morning. We pray the good Lord to continue to bless us, when He never has blessed us, and thank Him for blessings we have never received; thank Him because it has not been His pleasure to cast us into hell, as Holy Willy says."

Helen felt a little shocked at this woman's bitter denunciation of prayer and things sacred.

"Well, Miss Dupont, I don't agree with you, either. I do pray. It is this formal praying, this systematic way of worshiping God that I object to, for the reason that it seems sacrilegious to me. If we are in trouble it isn't necessary for us to be told to pray. Why, we pray naturally, just as we drink water when we are thirsty. Then if we are happy, overjoyed, don't we say, 'Thank Heaven;' don't we feel kindly toward everybody; do not our glad hearts and smiling faces thank God? It is done silently as the parched and withering flowers manifest their gratitude for the rain. You know we shall not be heard for much speaking."

"Then do you believe in the Bible?" Cleonice asked.

"Yes, don't you?"

"Why, no, I can't believe it; it is just one contradiction after another."

"Well, I've had to study it a good deal and do so yet; and lots of things that were impossible for me to understand at first, are clear to-day."

"Then how is it that they hold great revivals and try to convert people who know little or nothing about the Bible, little children, for instance, and fill up their churches with the ignorant as well as the wise?"

"That has been a mystery to me always; but I have known people who have declared that their conversion had been instantaneous. It wasn't so with me; I had to satisfy my reason first. I don't know when I was converted, when it commenced and where it left off. I only know that five years ago I didn't look upon things as I do now, and hadn't the faith I now have. And I suppose I'll grow stronger in faith as I grow older, at least, I hope so."

"Well, we are all accorded the privilege of believing as we want to, or rather, as we must, for the will has nothing to do with it. I can't make the Bible agree with me, and I can't possibly agree with it, so I let it alone entirely. But we won't quarrel over trivial matters. Let's drink to good fellowship and mutual disagreement." So saying, Cleonice went to the drawer and came back with a bottle of wine and two glasses.

"You must excuse me, Miss Dupont, but I don't drink wine."

"What!"

"I don't drink wine," Helen repeated

"You don't? All right then, I shall only have the more for myself," Cleonice said good-naturedly, and proceeded to empty a glass at one draught. "But I confess that I am surprised."

Helen frowned. "Why are you surprised?"

"I can hardly explain, but from your looks and actions, I supposed that you had too much nerve to hesitate to do things that nice, moral people might condemn; that is, I thought you were not afraid to do things that look questionable."

"Miss Dupont, you don't understand me at all!" Helen said decidedly. "I might do things that look questionable, but I don't do things that are questionable. You don't understand me."

"Well, I'm beginning to. You are much better than you would have people believe. I can hardly understand, though, how you came to be elected president of the society. Anna Boyd hated to give it up and a dozen of the other girls wanted it. Somehow you seem to command in some indescribable way; you wanted to be elected and you were. The girls and even the faculty all admire you and listen to you, and yet none of them are very fond of you. No girl ever throws her arm around you and whispers a secret to you; that isn't the way you excite regard; you command respect rather than affection. What a politician you would make if you were a man! Don't you wish you were? And what a fine looking man you would make! your features are just a little too pronounced for a beautiful woman, as you would undoubtedly be called in society."

"Why, it is supper time," Helen said, looking at her watch. "I must go to my room," and as she went she kept saying to herself, "Respect, rather than affection; that is what I want, of course it is. I don't want love. I wouldn't be a success if people loved me; it would make me weak and I should fail. I must be admired for my unyielding principles and noble aspirations, not for any pretty frivolous ways. My beauty is masculine, thank heaven, it is!" and repeating "Spartacus to the Gladiators," she tripped lightly to her room, brushed her hair back from her fine forehead in a masculine fashion, and hurried down to supper.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN it came Agnes' turn to lead in morning exercises, she selected a portion of the seventh chapter of Matthew.

"Judge not that ye be not judged.

"For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

"Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, 'Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye;' and behold a beam is in thine own eye.

"Thou hypocrite; first cast out the beam out of

thine own eye; and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.'"

As they knelt, Cleonice cast a significant glance at Helen, but it was lost. Helen's head had been bowed during the reading; the words, which in some way took on a new meaning under Agnes' reading, induced the same state of mind that her friend's questions frequently did.

As they passed out Helen heard a wicked voice—"Now there is work for us; we must fish for the beams. Maybe that is what ailed me all my life and—" Here Helen, with a dark frown, turned abruptly into a class room.

That evening upon returning from a walk, Helen found Agnes sitting with a book in her lap, gazing vacantly out of the window.

"What are you reading?" she asked.

"I have just finished 'The Last of the Barons,' by Lord Lytton."

"Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, you mean. There has been any quantity of Lord Lyttons, and several authors among them; but the series in the library are the works of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. What a man he was, if he did happen to be an Englishman! Isn't that perfectly splendid?"

"Yes, I like it tolerably well. This is the first time I've read it and it's the only one of his that I've read."

"It is? Why, I've read them all. I read that when I was only fifteen years old. I've read all of Scott's, and all of Dickens', and all of George Elliot's and all of Thackeray's, and all of Lew Wallace's, up to

date, and Hypatia—that's all of Kingsley's I've read."

Helen paused, quite out of breath.

"Well, you've read everything. I don't expect to read as much while I live as you have read already."

"No, I haven't read one-tenth—um—one-hundredth as much as I expect to, only I wish I'd not read all of those wonderful works of fiction."

"Why?"

"Because there's nothing left of this wonderful line to read. Yes, we've still Lew Wallace, but what it takes him years to write, we can read in a few days."

"You're a sort of Alexander."

"Oh, there's plenty of literature of other kinds—history, philosophy and scientific works. But Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton was a historian, philosopher, and novelist combined; there's more philosophy than romance in some of his works."

"And what do you think of this one?"

"I think it his strongest, though I believe the critics pronounce 'What Will He Do With It?' the best."

"What character did you like best?"

"I admired the Earl of Warwick most, but was more interested in old man Warner and Dick Alwyn."

"Why, I thought Lord Hastings was the hero."

"He was, of the romance. I liked him for a while, but I despised him in the end."

"Why?" asked Agnes with pretended indifference, still looking out of the window.

"Why? Because he deceived Sybil. I didn't

admire her style, but he should have done as he promised, even if he did find another woman more to his fancy."

"It is wrong, then, to betray—"

"It is the meanest thing on earth. I wouldn't betray the devil if he trusted me."

Agnes did not reply, but turned her face from Helen and sighed deeply. Just then some one rapped, and it proved to be the matron with a card for Agnes. "There is a young gentleman in the parlor to see you," she said. "He says he is an old friend of your family—that he used to work for your father. You know, Miss Easton, that the rules forbid a young lady from receiving visits from a young gentleman, unless they are engaged. Are you and—"

"No," Agnes faltered, catching hold of the back of a chair for support.

"He didn't state in what capacity he served in your father's household. Now, was he coachman?"

"Oh, no, he was papa's confidential—"

"You see we can't be too careful. You say you're not engaged?" Here Helen in half pity for the embarrassed Agnes, disgusted with such inquisitorial proceedings, interposed:

"Miss Scott, you are not exactly fair with Miss Easton. She is not engaged to the man at present, but you see she might be before she leaves him. You don't prohibit the students from becoming engaged, do you?"

"Oh, no, certainly, but we must be careful. You know engagements might be entered into which would not be agreeable to the parents. I would go

to the reception room with her, but I must go downtown at once. The bank closes in twenty minutes," she said, looking at her watch.

"Why can't I go with her?" Helen asked.

"Well, that might do. Yes, go with her—but I can't spare another minute."

"Wait," Helen called after her as she was descending the stairs, "I forgot, I have an appointment; I can't go with her."

"Very well, she will have to—" Helen missed hearing the last word, for the matron did not speak distinctly, provoked at having to answer at all in such a place and on such a subject.

"It's all right, Miss Easton," Helen said, stepping back into the room where Agnes was lying in a confused little heap among the pillows on the sofa. It was with some difficulty that Agnes made herself presentable, and 'twas a sorry, tear-stained face that greeted the hopeful, almost happy young lover. "What is it, Aggie? Wouldn't they let you see me? Well, it needn't be long until—" Here Agnes broke into tears and tried to say something about her engagement; but her love, long slumbering, awoke and was too strong for concealment. Her lover gathered her in his arms and had poured forth a torrent of endearing terms, before she could find words to tell him that it must not be. "But you love me, Aggie, don't you?" he expostulated when she finally succeeded in making him understand that somebody else, somewhere, had usurped his place. "Oh, George—but I mustn't even listen to you now," and gathering all her force, she bade him good-bye.

CHAPTER XV.

"How good of you to come!" Cleonice Dupont said upon opening the door for Helen; "I am nearly always alone; my room-mate cliques with that stupid Miss Jones, and is with her every idle minute. What fools girls are! Each one has a bosom friend to whom every secret must be told, and that bosom friend promptly repeats it to her chum and so on. I find it the best plan to keep one's secrets to one's self, don't you?"

"Every one to his taste, but I have no secrets that would interest any one."

"Let me see, I believe you do not drink, but I do, and I want some now. I always need a stimulant when I talk with you; you don't talk nonsense like most of girls. Why, I could talk to my room-mate in my sleep and she wouldn't know the difference. But why don't you drink wine? Don't you like the taste of it, or is it the effects you're afraid of?"

"It is because I believe in total abstinence. No one courts the effects and I don't know anything about the taste."

"That's all right for you, but you and I are very different women; you have something to live for and somebody, and I haven't."

"Yes, I've something to live for, an object, as every one has, but I have no particular person or persons to live for."

"Why, haven't you parents, brothers and sisters, somebody?"

"No one. I'm an orphan without relatives; so you see, I have no more than you to make life worth living."

"Then why do you live?"

"That's a queer question. I never thought sane people raised the to-be-or-not-to-be question. I am sure all of my hopes and ambitions are of the sort to be realized here upon earth. Why, I've never thought of *not* living, but I've thought a great deal about living. You see I've a mission to fulfill."

"Oh, yes, I like to see a girl enthusiastic about her mission, provided she subsides in time to save herself."

"From what?"

"Why, from folly," Cleonice answered with a forced, mirthless laugh.

"Miss Dupont, you don't make yourself clear; I'm no wiser than I was."

"You may be innocent, Miss Herman, but you're not ignorant. Folly in a woman means ruin."

"But why should— In what respects does it differ from man's folly?"

"If you don't know, you'll find out before your mission is fulfilled."

"But you don't know what my mission is."

"Don't I? Well, I think I do. Oh, you fancy yourself standing before ten thousand eyes, arrayed in the finest velvet and lace; blazing with jewels, and—oh, stuff!"

Helen's face turned scarlet under Cleonice's gaze, but she tried to reply with indifference: "You guess pretty well, Miss Dupont; you are a good guesser."

"It's no guess. Your face bespeaks your character; I could almost read your life."

"Do, please. I have always wanted to have my fortune told."

"I can't do that, but I can tell you what nature has marked you for, if you will follow your reason and do nothing rash."

"Very well, that will do."

"You are proud to a fault, sensitive, passionate, putting your whole soul into everything you do, even your bicycle riding. You are impulsive and at the same time cautious; you look at all sides, but you do it instantly. You may love, and deeply, but not wholly. If you must surrender your ambitions it will be with reluctance, perhaps with bitterness. I couldn't imagine you romping with a laughing child in a quiet, sheltered home, but I could well imagine you with a hundred little gaping mouths and eager countenances turned to you, as you in forcible, eloquent language delivered an address upon the necessity of education, ethics or something equally idiotic and beyond their minds. You would scarcely be at ease caring for a sick person, but you might give orders to a score of nurses. You could never be happy in the love of one man, but you would be delighted, inspired by the honorable admiration of a thousand. But your room-mate, 'sweet fool,' would be divinely happy in a little secluded home, with a lover for a husband, and curly-headed babes for heavenly torture; she would be content and true as steel."

"Then you mean to insinuate that I would not be true?"

"Never pick a person up, Miss Herman; never make him explain himself; just draw your own conclusions in silence and stab back at the first opportunity."

"You startle me. You have drawn my character so truly, that I fancied you might see farther than I, and discover insincerity."

"You would be true to a purpose, but I shouldn't want to answer for your acts if you renounced your liberty to think and do as you pleased, for the adoration of a husband and the four walls of home. You can cage a canary and it will love its captor, but when you cage a lioness, you must ever be on the watch lest in some unguarded moment she spring upon her captor and devour him. Do you understand?"

"Yes, too well. You have drawn a proud though terrible picture. So I must avoid matrimony if I would be happy and useful."

"Draw your own conclusions."

"And stab back?"

"That is your privilege," Cleonice said, laughing.

"Well, thank you, but associating with you is likely to make me conceited. I must go. Come and see me sometime."

"Maybe, but I would rather you would come here, instead. Miss Martin is always gone as soon as study hours are over. I would just as soon go to your room, but I don't think that little room-mate is much in love with me. She shies off from me as if she thought I would eat her. She needn't be afraid; I wouldn't hurt the precious little cotton-head."

"For shame, Miss Dupont! I think she is nice and good, although she doesn't interest me."

"Well, we won't quarrel. I think she is nice, too, but of small consequence."

Helen went to her room feeling her power to her very finger tips. After working off her surplus energy on "Spartacus to the Gladiators" and "Marco Bozzaris" she thought to experiment with something of a sentimental sort, and tried to render Maud Muller in what she thought the appropriate style, and was struggling with the expression of the lines:

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen
The saddest are these: It might have been."

when Agnes with tear-stricken face entered the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

"WE might be better friends," Agnes was saying one cold winter evening as she and Helen sat in their cozy room. As time had gone by they had become better acquainted, but were no better friends than at first. "I might be different, and you might be different."

"I don't dislike you, Miss Easton, at all, but we don't interest each other. We don't read the same books, talk on the same subjects nor admire the same things, consequently we don't enjoy each other's society—that's all."

"Miss Herman, I do like to hear you talk, only you seem so unsympathetic. You use good language;

your extemporaneous speech last night was just splendid, but while you are sympathetic to the generality, you are like ice to the individual."

"I have no sympathy for people's selfishness."

"But you don't know anything about my aims."

"Well, I know the ambition of all such girls as yourself. Nearly every woman centers all of her aims on some one man, whether he loves her or not. To get married is her one hope, and her mind holds nothing but her own little world. What has your love affair to do with the questions that are perplexing the world to-day; with the wide-spread homelessness, want and misery? What interest do you feel in the doings of this Congress, which is expected to adopt measures that will bring about better times? Imagine yourself, Agnes, a laborer out of work, or employed at starvation wages. How much heed are you giving to the fact that thousands of mothers in our own country are haggard with anxiety, heart-broken at the future of their children?"

Agnes shuddered and her blue eyes filled with tears. "Such things are terrible, I know; and Heaven knows, I sympathize with the suffering and distress, but what can I do? I can only pray and I do pray."

"Prayer without works availeth nothing," Helen said.

"If I can do anything, tell me what it is and I will willingly and gladly do it. I always give when I am solicited, and what more can I do; what more can you do?"

"Tears do no good and prayers are but half. First we must keep posted on the condition of things; we

must read and investigate and think. If people had done this, things would be far different. Men vote blindly for certain men, whether those men are sufficiently intelligent and honest or not, and then seem to dismiss the subject of public welfare from their minds, while the women, as a rule, see no connection between their affairs and those of the nation, and 'twould do them no good if they did. How many of the girls, do you suppose, read of what is going on in Congress? Yet the question to-day is the poverty question, and certainly woman has quite as much at stake as man. We've got to think of these things. I can't exactly explain the qualifications of the useful woman, but I know you must think of being useful and desire to be so; above all things disdain petty selfishness, and live so as to force an acknowledgment from every one that you are somebody and can do something."

"If I wanted advice upon any subject that required brain power, I would go to you, but I'd as soon think of pouring out my soul to the marble Venus in the hall as to think of opening my heart to you."

"If you were troubled about something connected with anything high and noble, you could, indeed, depend upon me; but if it were about some trivial personal affair, you might as well—I'd rather you'd go to Venus."

"Well, we won't talk about it any more; my head aches so."

"I'm not surprised; this room is stifling, I'm beginning to feel languid and sleepy myself. I think I shall go and see Miss Dupont; she always stirs me

up. By the way, has she ever been to school before?"

"No. You are such friends; I should think you would have learned that from her."

"Well, I have never asked her; there are some people, who, for some reason, one doesn't care to question. How handsome she is and what a magnificent form."

"Yes."

"I wonder if she is an American; she seems to have a slight accent. Did you ever notice it?"

"Yes, her speech does seem a little peculiar, but I never thought of it before."

"I think, Miss Easton, that if you would wrap a shawl about your shoulders, open that window and sit for half an hour with your head out you'd feel better. I would get over the habit of having headaches if I were you. The time is fast approaching when a woman will be as ashamed to confess having a headache as she would now to having the itch."

"Oh, you great goose! I think you are drawing on your imagination a little," Agnes said with rising temper.

"Well, I'm not. The itch is a sure sign of filth, and the headache only arises from one of three causes."

"And what are they?"

"First, and most common, is too tight clothing; second, an overloaded stomach; third, nervousness."

"You know I ate scarcely any dinner and no supper, and this Mother Hubbard is not squeezing me to death."

"There is still another cause."

"I know I'm not nervous," Agnes said, laughing, and then began to cry.

CHAPTER XVII.

"At last!" Cleonice said, as she opened the door for Helen. "I thought you would never come. Have you seen the evening paper?"

"No. What is the matter?"

"Only that another millionaire has reduced his employees' wages and another strike is on tap."

"Awful, awful! Is there any distress among the families of the strikers?"

"Not yet, of course, but there will be."

"Well, we've one consolation; there's a hell yawning for the wicked."

"Oh, mercy; if I thought of hell as some people do, I'd be miserable. You read the Bible so much, what is your idea of hell?"

"Why, a just and reasonable punishment for sins, and I think it will be right here on earth after the resurrection."

"Do you believe there will be a resurrection of the dead?"

"Of course, and I think it is very near."

Cleonice looked startled. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"Why, that the last days are at hand, the time

Christ speaks of in the 24th chapter of Matthew and again in the last chapter of James, where it says:

“Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you.

“Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten.

“Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasures together for the last days.

“Behold, the hire of the laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.’

“Don’t you see? rich men were never so troubled about their gold as they are to-day, and never before in the history of the world have there been so many fabulously rich men; they have heaped up treasure for the last days. And look how the laborer is defrauded of his rights. There is another place in the Bible where it speaks of the great inventions that will multiply in the last days. Oh, the whole thing is plain to me; the world is six thousand years old and the seven thousand is the great Sabbath, the era of peace and rest.”

“Who has put such ideas into your head?”

“Nobody,” Helen said contemptuously. “It is in the Bible as plain as the commandments.”

“Then how is it so few find it?”

“Because so few want to find it. Preachers don’t want it. People don’t want to know that the time is near when we must deal honestly with our fellow

men, when each must stand on his own merits. We refuse to think of it because it makes us uncomfortable in our selfishness, and preachers don't want to know it because it means a death blow to the church. The Catholic church tried to keep the Bible from the people because they knew that as soon as the people became educated the church would be dead, and it is just so to-day. Preachers are either ignorant themselves or they want to keep the people down. Oh, there is such appalling ignorance in the church! If it were just of the quiet, meek sort it might be borne, but this kind that goes out and peddles itself is past all charity."

"You have given several reasons why the people do not want to know the truth, as you term your fantasy, but you omitted one—the most important one, too."

"What is it?"

"Why, they probably realize that they are not ready for the coming of Christ."

"No, they are not ready and they don't want to get ready. We are nearly all usurpers and we don't want to give up our offices and high worldly positions for 'The first shall be last, and the last shall be first.'"

"Well, Miss Herman, I admire the sheep more that strays into forbidden pastures, but let me tell you that those that follow the bell are the happier. The common herd, after all, have the best time of it, whether they are wisest or not. Now, there is the calm, sweet Miss Easton, who kneels every Sunday in her Presbyterian pew; she was born and will live

and die, and though she may be recorded in heaven, she scarcely will be on earth. She folds her hands on her peaceful breast and walks uncomplainingly in the straight and conventional way, but you place your arms akimbo and push and surge and knock against everybody. Take care, Miss Herman, you will wear your life away swimming against the tide."

"If the sheep are happy in the herd, the stray would be miserable there, and I shall continue to follow my inclinations and browse in strange pastures."

"Yes, you are all right. As I said once before, a meek and gentle spirit may be caged, but there are some natures that will not be restricted. 'All the world's a stage,' and on her broad boards many dramas are played; there are comedies, melodramas, farces and tragedies, but after each and all the lights go out and the stage is dark."

Here as if to lend effect to the somber words and ominous half-prophecy, the electric lights were turned off. The signal had been given, but neither had noticed it, so interested were they in their talk.

"Mercy! I must go," Helen said, springing up. "My door will be locked."

"Sleep with me," Miss Dupont said.

"But your room-mate?"

"She hasn't come yet. I suppose she will sleep where she is."

"No, I mustn't stay," Helen said, as she opened the door noiselessly. She liked Cleonice, was interested in her, but could not endorse her bitter, strange denunciations, nor enjoy her grim, contemptuous

moods. She could not think of spending the night with her, and hurried to her own room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"ARE you going to church?" Agnes said to Helen, one Sunday morning in January, as they returned to their room from breakfast.

"I think not—maybe I will, too, for I can't ride my wheel to-day, and if I don't go to church I won't get out at all. The Sundays are so dull here after spending them in a large place like R—."

"It was too bad about the blockade keeping you from going home, when you wanted to go so bad." Then after a moment: "Pardon me, Miss Herman, but it is queer to me that you do not belong to some religious denomination, when you read the Bible so much and quote Scripture like a phonograph." Agnes looked up in bashful expectancy. She feared she had gone a little too far, but had been dying for months to know why Helen didn't belong to any church, and had never before had courage to ask.

"I might tell you," Helen returned, "but you wouldn't be satisfied. You know all people do not see alike."

"But what are you, anyway? You must be something."

"Maybe I am, but I haven't found a name for it yet."

Agnes looked up quickly.

"Well, it's the truth," Helen said dryly. "I've a little sect of my own, I guess, and I don't quarrel with the churches any worse than they do among themselves.

" 'And concerning the road they can never agree,
The old or the new way, which shall it be?
And never a moment stop to think
That both must pause at the river's brink.

" ' "Sprinkled or plunged, may I ask, my friend,
How you attained to life's great end?"
"Thus, with a few drops upon my brow"—
"But I've been plunged, as you'll see me now,

" ' "And I really think it will hardly do,
As I'm in close communion, to cross with you;
You're bound, I know, to the realm of bliss,
But you must go that way and I'll go this."

" ' Then straightway plunging with all his might
Off to the left, his friend to the right,
Apart they went from this world of sin,
But at last together they entered in.'

"And just so it will be in the end. Just as every river runs directly or indirectly to the sea, will every soul get into the abode of the saints. God doesn't tell us things that are unreasonable. When we understand his laws we see them to be reasonable and methodical; we see that he had a plan and didn't just flop things together. Why, the whole universe is governed by law; life and death are according to law. Philosophers study and dig, and when they have discovered a law they see it to be simple enough. The sun, shining through falling water, creates what we call a rainbow, yet people were once superstitious

about it, as they also were about the sun, the moon and nearly every aspect of Nature, until study revealed law behind all phenomena. We discovered the law of gravitation after it had been in operation for thousands of years. All of these things have existed like the coal mines which, though unknown to man, have been in the depths of the earth awaiting his discovery of them. I think the time will come when we will understand that God knew what He was about when He made the world." Here Helen paused to give Agnes a chance to offer something, but the latter was in no mood for logical religion and absently replied, "Most probably."

Helen then launched into politics, began to talk of tariff, free silver, capital and labor, corrupt politicians and incomprehensible things in general, but Agnes only replied, "I don't understand it at all." But Helen was wound up and her tongue just had to relieve the tension on her mind, so she struck off on the temperance question, and here, to her surprise, Agnes pricked up her ears and began to show a decided interest.

"Do you think it is wrong for men to drink?" she asked.

"Oh, it all depends upon the man; if his hands are soft and white, and his purse is well lined, why, it's too bad; he is such a fine man otherwise—so influential; but if his hands are rough and horny it's awful—beastly."

"But what do you think of the gold-cure so many are taking?" Agnes asked, smiling. Helen's irony grated on her, but still it amused her.

"Why, I think it is the best thing we have. It is doing more for the cause of temperance than the W. C. T. U. and church combined. It takes hold of a man in a different way; makes him feel ordinarily respectable; tells him that he is diseased and can be cured, just as he could be cured of any other disease. You see, it doesn't degrade him as other temperance work does. The preacher says, 'You poor, degraded, wretched, miserable old sinner, come up here and kneel at this altar and pray the blessed Lord to save your sinful soul from Hell.' The church might save him if it could convert him, but it doesn't go about it in the right way to succeed."

"Oh, I never heard a preacher talk that way."

"Well, I have. I heard a preacher tell his audience that they were not fit for the buzzards to puke on, and a year later when he came back, the first thing he said was, 'Well, you old cusses are here yet; I expected you would all be in hell by this time.'"

"Oh, mercy! You must have lived in Arkansas or Texas."

"Don't insult Arkansas or Texas by insinuating that such are peculiar to them. Why, these self-styled 'evangelists' are not confined to any locality, but are lunatics at large."

"But this man didn't get any converts?"

"Yes, he did, dozens and scores of them, and when he preached his farewell sermon women wept, and the whole congregation went forward to say good-bye, and some clung to his hand as if they never could bear to let him go. Indeed, they are very successful; so much so that local preachers are aping them until

the pulpit is becoming—is the scene of the most disgusting sensationalism.”

“Such a man would be hissed from any pulpit I know of. Our town is small, but our preachers are at least refined. But about the temperance union. You wear a white ribbon, but you speak of it as if it were doing the temperance cause no good.”

“No, I think it does some good, of course. It at least appeals to refined women if not to men. Refined women will not drink.”

“Oh, Helen, do not say that. You have never been in Saratoga; you have never been in London; the finer the lady the more she drinks. We were invited to spend a few days at Lady Cornwall’s country place, and I tell you a waiter could bring you a glass of wine quicker than he could a glass of ice water. Papa isn’t a temperance man, though he cannot be called a drinking man, but he made some excuse and got us away before the time set, and told Aunt Kate not to accept any more invitations; he was so afraid Joe would get to drinking. It’s different in England; any one who turns his glass down at the table there is a conspicuous figure. Joe tried to turn his once at dinner, but in trying to be quick so as to avoid notice, broke it. His hostess promptly bade the waiter bring him another, never suspecting what caused him to do it.”

“She probably knew that he was a congressman’s son.”

“Oh, yes,” Agnes answered, innocently, “and the hostess is a prominent woman in London.”

“Well, I have my own private opinion of what is nice, but I have never been in society.”

"But," said Agnes, recurring to the treatment subject, "did you ever know any one who took the gold-cure and always stuck to it?"

"I know a man who has 'always stuck,' for seven years."

"And you think the cure a good thing."

"Most certainly."

"And you think a majority are cured for good?"

"Why, yes. But why are you so interested; does your father or brother drink?"

"No."

"But somebody does—your sweetheart, maybe?"

Agnes blushed and looked appealingly at Helen.

"Well, if he does, I should prescribe the cure for him."

"Oh, Helen, Miss Herman, I wish you would show half as much pity for me as you do for a hungry dog. I believe you spend two or three dollars a week buying meat for hungry dogs."

"I don't believe you are hungry, Agnes, and if you are it is your own fault; you eat at the same table with me, and I always satisfy myself."

"I'm not hungry, but my heart is breaking," Agnes said with a sob and buried her face in her hands.

"Well, Agnes, if you've anything to tell, I'm ready to listen. I can't promise any great sympathy in a love affair, but I will at least respect your confidence."

Agnes raised her head and looked her thanks through her tears. Like any other tender-hearted girl, she had longed for a confidante, and while Helen's odd, careless way had chilled her every time she would have divulged her secret, yet she longed to tell her.

She knew that a girl who fed hungry dogs must have a warm spot in her heart. She felt great confidence in Helen's power to move things. A girl who led in devotional exercises or not, just as she chose, a girl who had been elected president of a college society on a three weeks' acquaintance, and who stood right in with the brainy principal must be endowed with uncommon ability; and the dependent, clinging Agnes wanted just such a friend.

"Oh, how good of you! I expect it's awful in me to want to bother any one else with my troubles."

"It won't bother me. If I can give you any advice I will do so, and if I can't I will dismiss it from my mind."

So without any more preliminaries, Agnes began. She didn't want to lose the vantage ground she had gained.

"Papa, until the last two years, fed stock. Three years ago he hired a young man to come to the place to take charge of the business, buying and so forth. The young man's name was George Sanderson, and he was very bright and well-mannered. Father took a liking to him and treated him as a friend. The next summer when Joe and I went home we got acquainted with him and liked him as well as papa did. We used to go on horseback with him all over the country when he was out buying stock. I was only fifteen and George twenty-two, but we thought a great deal of each other, and, with Joe as our confidante, we made arrangements to marry when I got to be eighteen, and go to California. George had been buying on the Board of Trade and had made some-

thing and we thought that in three years he would have money enough to buy a ranch. How we planned and how I hated to come back to school! but of course I had to. I got a letter every other day. He was still making money and our planning continued and our affection grew stronger all the time. Papa was reëlected that fall. He had always kept wine, but the boys were never allowed to drink any and they never seemed to want to; but when papa knew himself elected again, contrary to his usual way he gave the boys wine, and after he had gone to his room they got up and came back to the dining-room and drank and drank. There is where it began, but not where it ended with poor George. Joe hadn't been in school, having been around with papa during the campaign, but the next day he was sent to school—one that was very strict—so he was all right, but George kept on until papa had to discharge him, and a letter was sent to school telling them not to let me correspond with him. So we lost each other. I heard afterward that he lost his money just as he had made it—on the Board of Trade, but heard nothing from him directly until last summer, when Joe accidentally ran across him. Papa felt so bad about the affair that he had the wine locked up in the cellar and is awful careful who he treats now.

“A year ago last summer I went to Europe with papa and Aunt Kate and Joe. We traveled some, but spent most of our time in London, where I met a Lord Avon. He was handsome and rich and was very nice to me, but I thought nothing of it at the time; last summer he came unexpectedly, one day,

and talked with papa; told him that he had fallen in love with me in London, and was just on the point of proposing to me when he heard I was engaged. But fortunately he had just discovered the report to be false and had hurried right over to ask me to be his wife, and he begged papa to consent. Papa said he would leave it to me and sent for me to come down." Agnes blushed and stammered. "I—well—I don't know how it happened. I don't think I intended to say yes, but when he went away I was—we were engaged.

"Two days afterwards Joe came home—he had been off with a fishing party. Well, he was so disgusted with me to think that I would marry an Englishman, and a titled one at that, that he got me as disgusted as himself. And then he told me that he had seen George Sanderson; that George's uncle had paid for his treatment and sent him to school; and that George hadn't drunk for over two years and was a temperance lecturer. Then after I came here I got a letter from him, and 'twas he who came to see me that day, you know."

"The most serious kind of a love affair is trivial enough to me, but I really do feel a little sympathy for you. What are you going to do about it?"

"Why, what can I do? I must keep my promise."

"But couldn't you do something to make him draw off?"

"Oh, a man never breaks an engagement."

"Well, Miss Easton, I would help you if I could, but I see no chance. I am interested in other things," and Helen turned and looked absently out of the

window. She felt sorry for her room-mate, yet she had no admiration for the woman who could spend her life weeping and mourning over an unhappy love affair. With a world to save; with riot and bloodshed on every hand and the fierce fight between capital and labor threatening dire disaster to the country; when every day brought fresh news of serious trouble somewhere, such mooning was contemptible. She was educating herself to take part in the struggle, and so strong and vivid was her thought that she irrelevantly quoted aloud: "For when you see these signs, you may know that the time is near, even at the door."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Won't they ever do anything with the silver question?" Helen said to herself, as she threw the evening paper down and left the reading-room. Every day since Congress had been called together she had watched the papers, and every day it was the same thing. Some senator six or eight, or even ten hours on the floor and talking as long as he had anything to say; when he had nothing more to say he was privileged to hold the floor and keep his mouth going. The country raved and swore vengeance on the traitors,

" Whose treason like a deadly blight
Comes o'er the councils of the brave;
And blasts them in their hour of might."

In disgust Helen sought Cleonice. She could de-

nounce a Democratic, congress to Cleonice, but she couldn't let Agnes know how disappointed she was. A Democrat can scorch his party's doings to another Democrat, but not to a Republican.

CHAPTER XX.

CLEONICE DUPONT, acting upon Helen's suggestion to study the Bible for the sake of knowledge, if nothing more, had gradually grown so interested in it that she studied it more than any of her books. One day she was sitting reading page after page.

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves ye may know the summer is nigh.

"So likewise ye, when ye see all these things, know that the end is near, even at the door."

"It is true," she said, "I believe it is true; the time of the end is at hand. But with all the proof at hand there is still strong evidence against. For no bastard can enter the Kingdom of Heaven; how can she reconcile that? Oh, they ran, and pray and adore the blessed Lord, and yet in His Word He says no bastard shall enter heaven. Why should I want to be there and my precious innocent darling not with me?" Here she opened a drawer and took a picture from it and gazed at it with streaming eyes.

"No, my baby, I must be with you wherever you are; I must be with you and no bastard can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Oh, God, why can't my sin fall upon my own soul?" she said, sobbing wildly.

"Why, Cleonice, what is the matter? You didn't hear me knock and I heard you crying, so I came in."

"Helen Herman, you here!" Cleonice said, springing to her feet, the tender expression gone and a look of proud defiance settling on her dark face. "You are here to spy upon me, you false friend, you deceitful comrade. I was fool enough to like you; I would have trusted you, because with your frank, open, independent manner you seemed worthy of trust, but now I know it to be but a mask to cover your deceitful purposes."

"Cleonice, you had no cause to trust me. I never asked, never wanted your confidence. I don't invite the confidence of any one, for I do not care to be encumbered with the troubles of individuals. I liked you because you were not a silly, giggling girl; because you were original, well read and good company. You interested me because you are not so foolishly conventional as the ordinary woman.

"I know your secret," she continued, "but I did not seek to discover it. I suspected nothing, but hearing you sobbing, thoughtlessly hurried in. I heard your last words and caught a glimpse of the pretty baby picture, and though country born and bred I'm not an innocent fool. But before now I never suspected you, considering you a woman of courage and strong character, above the frivolity of love and weak passion. Alas, I find my mistake and I cannot help showing what I feel, contempt for one who, endowed with God's choicest gifts, intelligence, keen perceptions, allowed herself to be wheedled and coaxed like any pretty silly girl out—"

"Helen Herman, there is the door. Go, and tell what you know—I defy you. The same trouble that has befallen me has befallen many others. You have chosen the same profession that I chose. You will admire what I admired—the society of the polished gentlemen; you have the same weaknesses and passions that I had. Be warned and go, but remember 'the rapids are below you.'"

CHAPTER XXI.

"THE headache again, Agnes?" Helen said one day when she came up from dinner and found Agnes bathing her head in ice water. "I missed you at dinner and knew what the matter was, of course. Well, if you're determined to have the headache, I can't do anything for you."

"It's so fearfully warm," Agnes said, paying no attention to Helen's remark. She had grown accustomed to her room-mate's way, and though she disliked it, paid no attention to it.

"There is a black cloud coming up in the northwest. We will get rain this evening, maybe, and the atmosphere will be cooled off."

"Are you going down?" Agnes asked as Helen turned to leave the room.

"Yes, I'm going to get a book."

"Bring me something."

"What shall it be?"

"Oh, something light."

"Shall I bring you a magazine, *Scribner's* or the *Arena*?"

"Oh no, something light—something that won't make my headache worse."

"I might find Mother Goose's Rhymes."

"Helen, you are just hateful, you are. Because I can't plow through the 'Age of Reason,' or the 'Descent of Man,' or something equally absurd and contrary to the Bible, is no reason why you should speak to me as though I had no sense. You believe the Bible, or claim you do, and I don't see how you can read Darwin's books trying to prove man came from a monkey and a monkey from something lower. You are not consistent. I believe you are afraid that somebody will know something that you don't."

"Well, forgive me, Agnes, I was just joking. But you and I look upon books in a different way; I should want to read something good if I read at all. The *Arena* is the best magazine going; there's variety of reading in it, and you can pick out what you want. Mercy! what a clap of thunder! how quickly that cloud has come up! Well, shall I bring you a paper?"

"No, no, that clap of thunder has nearly set me crazy. Oh, my head!"

"Sha'n't I do something for you?"

"I don't know what you could do. I'll feel better after the rain. Gracious! that thunder! Go to the end of the hall and look, Helen! How the wind blows, and such lightning. Come back, Helen!" Agnes screamed frantically. Just then a blinding flash of lightning and a deafening crash of thunder rent the air and Agnes saw Helen fall at the farther end of the hall, just as she turned to run.

"Oh, Heaven! Helen, come—I'll help you—can't you help yourself a little?"

But Helen was senseless and white as the dead. The storm was growing fiercer; the great branches of trees dashed against the windows, smashing as they went. The hysterical screams of the girls, added to the storm, made an indescribable din.

Agnes called loudly for help, but none came; then with a strength wholly foreign to her small fragile form, she seized Helen and dragged her the length of the hall to the stairway, and then looked around in despair; she could go no farther, so she dropped her burden and started for help; she had reached but the middle of the stairway when she was roughly pushed aside by Cleonice Dupont.

"You coward girl; the building is on fire. I wouldn't leave a dog to be burned to death."

The building was filled with smoke and the wind lashed the flames to a fury, but Agnes hadn't noticed it; she crouched down on the steps against the banister to allow Cleonice to pass, carrying Helen in her arms as if she had been an infant.

A moment more and the storm was over. The cloud had spent its force, and rode past still looking inky and awful. The sun shone out and it was very calm.

The lightning had struck a wing of the structure easily accessible, but the fire-company extinguished the flames with little difficulty.

When Helen came to herself she was in bed and Agnes was bending over her. The matron stood at

the foot of the bed and the doctor was busy at the table preparing medicine.

"All right," he said as he saw Helen return to consciousness. "She'll get along all right now; just follow up with these drops every hour and if she is restless and sleepless to-night, give one of these powders and another in three hours if she is still restless. Can this young woman be trusted to watch her?" he asked the matron.

"Oh, yes, I think she can, if you give full directions. You say there is nothing serious?"

"Oh, no, as much fright as anything. You understand about the medicine; the drops every hour and the powders if she should be restless; and report to me in the morning." Then he took his hat and went to the door, where he stopped and again gave orders about the medicine.

Helen waited until the doctor and the matron had gone, then turned to Agnes: "So they've got me bundled up in bed and somehow I feel satisfied to be here. How did it happen? I remember the storm breaking and my feeling dizzy and faint, but that's all."

"You were shocked by the lightning."

"No, Agnes, it must have been the thunder. The awfulest crashes I ever heard!"

"The thunder frightened you, but it must have been the lightning that shocked you."

"No, I am sure, I remember the thunder plainer than the lightning. But what else happened? I see the building is left standing."

"Yes, but it came near burning down; the floor is

all burnt away where you fell and the walls are in such a shape that that wing will have to be rebuilt."

"And who got me away?"

"Why, I dragged you to the head of the stairs and Cleonice Dupont came running up and carried you down."

"You got me away, Agnes; *you* dragged me to the stairs?" Helen asked in amazement, as she looked at the girl she had always thought to be so insignificant.

"Yes, I got you that far, but couldn't get you any further, and if it hadn't been for Miss Dupont you would have been suffocated by the smoke."

"Well, Agnes, I'm grateful to you and Cleonice, but words don't mean anything. Maybe I'll be able sometime to show my gratitude in some more substantial manner; for the present I'm terribly in your debt. Now I will rest; I feel sleepy," Helen said as her eyes filled with tears; and she turned her face to the wall.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FEW days later Helen was up, and she and Agnes were very close together, talking in the most friendly way in the world.

"Agnes, I arranged it all while I lay in bed. I will hunt the Englishman up—make desperate love to him and take him off your hands."

Agnes threw her arm around Helen's neck and tried

to remonstrate, but Helen stopped her. "You see, I owe you something. Of course I don't know anything about your lordling, but if he's like all the others my three millions will catch him. Then if he's a little fastidious, why, I'm pretty enough. I'm not awkward, appear well, and I've enough education; and then you can have your boy lover."

"Oh, Helen, Helen! I used to think you had a heart of stone, but you are an angel. You would ruin your own happiness—no, I can't let you."

"I've no happiness to ruin. I'm not in love with anybody and I don't see why I might not fall in love with the Englishman as well as with any one else and make him treat you so you could break off the engagement." Helen was very sure she could do anything she chose and Agnes thought her almost superhuman.

"I positively believe you could do so if you wanted to; but it does look so awful, so wicked for us to be planning on such a thing."

"Looks wicked for a girl to be planning to secure a titled husband? I have wanted one ever since I was ten years old, and now—Oh, ye gods! I will have him in spite of you; I will captivate him with my three millions and my smile. Oh, I'm determined, Agnes; but the thing is, how shall I meet him?"

"You shall go home with me in June." The temptation was too strong. "He is invited to be there and we are all going to Saratoga or Newport to spend the hottest part of summer."

"I positively believe there is something natural in me despite your constant assurance that I'm the queerest girl on earth. I already feel quite jubilant

over the prospect. I believe I know how to flirt, if I haven't had the experience. But I must have some new dresses, and instead of taking my lessons next Saturday I'll go to the city on a shopping excursion. Can't you go along? But I must go to Cleonice. You say she didn't come near while I was in bed?"

"No, but she asked after you several times."

"Well, I will go to her room."

"Yes, I would. You two haven't been very friendly lately; and she did more than I to save you."

A few moments later Helen knocked at Cleonice's door. It was the hour when she had always found Cleonice alone, and this time was no exception to the rule. Cleonice opened the door and stepped back and motioned Helen to enter.

"Cleonice," Helen said, much embarrassed, "I want to thank you for saving me as you did. I want to say that I appreciate what you have done, and I don't consider a mere 'thank you' sufficient. Cleonice, I want to be your friend. I want to be on the same terms with you that I was three weeks ago."

"Miss Herman, you could do nothing less than offer your friendship. But tell me the truth fully, have you missed my companionship, would you have offered your friendship if I had not rendered you a service?"

"Yes, I have missed you; my evenings have been dull. No, I probably would never have come to you had you not done as you did, for I shouldn't have known that you possessed true courage; I would still have fancied you as weak in every way as—"

"As I have been in moral courage," Cleonice said. "Miss Herman, you can't possibly feel any more contempt for me than I feel for myself. It will not be possible for us to be to each other just what we were; we stand upon different planes; you are higher and nobler in my sight than you were, and I, alas, am a depraved creature to you."

"How? Didn't you save my life in return for the denunciation I hurled at you? How have I risen in your estimation?"

"Because you have known my secret and kept it and allowed no one to see by your manner that we were not friends. Haven't you spoken just as courteously as ever, and wasn't it an effort? Your face crimsoned; it is true; I have felt the same even when leading an immoral life myself; I have drawn my skirts aside that I might not brush against one of my own kind; and to-day I despise immoral women, and those most who cloak their sin with assumed purity."

"Oh, Cleonice, you can't know what contempt I feel for myself for treating you as—"

"We can't be the same again, Helen," Cleonice interposed. "I don't expect that; but we can spend an evening together occasionally. You advised me to read the Bible just for knowledge'sake, and I find that it satisfies more than knowledge, but there are places that I do not understand and I want your help."

"I will do all I can for you; but I feel so insignificant. Oh, I feel so weak and small in the sight of God. Do you know, I had often thanked Him

that I was not as others, as you and Agnes Easton. She with her child's face and almost child's form, did for me what I with my great strong body might not have done for her. And you, whom I had wronged, rushed back in a burning building and rescued me." Here the last vestige of her pride vanished and she burst into tears.

"Sit down, Helen, I'm going to tell you something of my past life, that you may take warning. Don't ever be deceived by the idea that marriage in the sight of God is equivalent to marriage sanctioned by man. As sure as you do, your peace of mind is gone. You take to trashy literature, wine and gambling. You must occupy yourself with something, and your paramour cannot take you among women of his acquaintance. You go down the ladder, step by step, first with fear and trembling, then with less trepidation, finally carelessly and recklessly. Fifty outcast women die in sin to one that is reclaimed. Few men of these whom we recognize as gentlemen will marry the mistress of another man, and there is no happiness to be had in such marriage, for the man never trusts such a wife and is always suspicious. I don't know how God punishes the libertine and seducer after death, but his happiness is not marred on earth. But the Lord did curse Eve and that curse still rests upon her daughters." Helen sat with her face hidden in her hands. A few moments ago her pride seemed entirely gone, but now it began to rise. Why should she be warned against such things; she with her stout heart and dauntless courage? But she was silent, feeling that she must listen to anything that Cleonice had to say.

"You are left just as I was," Cleonice continued, "an orphan, without friends, beautiful, and very sure of your own strength. You are about to go upon the stage. That is what I did. A few words more then you may go, and we will ignore the subject forever. Remember to avoid wine, first, last and always, and that though you may sail smoothly for a time, 'the rapids are below you.'"

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONGRESSMAN EASTON and his son were in the library, Joe having run down from school to spend Sunday at home.

"But about this unpleasant little affair with the Englishman; just how will we manage it? You are sure Aggie doesn't care anything for him?"

"Not a continental," Joe returned in a man-of-the-world fashion, as he bit the end off a Havana and lighted it. "She don't even rave over his hair and mustache."

"Then the evidence is conclusive, you think—keen perception, Joe—evidence that you will be a success at law—but have you any suggestions to offer?"

"Why, he is already invited to spend the summer with us."

"Yes."

"Well, invite some other Englishman, so he won't be lonesome; then a girl or two—rich ones, of course—and I'll manage to give out the impression that

your finances are not what they might be. There's the thing in a nutshell."

"My scheme exactly! But what girls shall we ask?"

"Had we better invite two or only one?"

"Why, if we have two, he'll have a variety to choose from."

"That's what I'm afraid of, Pa; a variety might rattle the poor fellow; he might not be able to decide between them, and after all take Agnes."

"Keen perceptions again, Joe; I've really cause to be proud of you. But who shall the one be? Most rich girls will be wanting to go to Saratoga or Newport as soon as the season opens. They won't want to come out to a country place even for a fortnight."

"Don't you fool yourself," Joe said as he daintily tipped the ashes from his cigar. "Just casually mention in your invitation that Lord Avon, of —shire, England, will be here, and see how quick she'll renounce Saratoga and the pretty bathing suits of Newport."

Our congressman chuckled; his son was indeed promising. "Well, you've done so well, so far, that I might have left the whole thing to you, as I intend to from now on. Whom will you invite?"

"Did Agnes ever say anything to you in her letters about her room-mate?"

"Not that I remember of."

"Well, she has to me; wrote that she had a room-mate who was an orphan without relatives and very rich—worth three millions."

"Just the very thing. But wait; I believe she re-

ferred to her a time or two, but never very warmly—didn't seem to like her, in fact."

"Write her and tell her to be good to the widows and orphans; tell her that you liked the description of her friend and to bring her home with her in June. That wasn't the one Agnes helped in the storm?"

Here the mail was handed in. "Give me the news, quick, Joe; I wonder how the market closed off." Then hastily scanning the prices, our modern legislator ejaculated, "By G—d, I'll hold on a while longer."

"Here is a letter for you from Agnes. Shall I open it?"

"Of course." And Joe read:

"May 23, 1894.

"MY DEAR FATHER AND AUNTIE:—I haven't had an answer to my last, but I suppose you are both busy. I will pass all right, though I don't expect to come out with honors. I wish some of you could be here to see me graduate, but of course I know that to be impossible, unless it might be that Aunt Kate could come, if she could be content to leave off preparations for our English guest.

"I wish I could bring a friend home with me—Miss Herman, my room-mate. I didn't used to like her, but since the storm we have gotten to be great friends. She's just splendid, only she's a Democrat, but surely you won't care for that. She can't vote but she can talk like everything, yet I know she won't do anything to injure you while she is our guest. I think she is the finest girl in the world, and so will you. I do hope I may bring her. Let me know at once. Lovingly,

"AGNES."

"Everything plays into our hands," Joe said, as he laid the letter down. "I'll answer it, Pa."

"Wish you would. I'll have to start for Washington this evening. Every Republican has to be on duty these days; we must defeat every Democratic measure. D—d if they haven't got things in a precious muddle! Can't agree among themselves about tariff or silver; haven't done anything but empty the treasury, and the people are disgusted and mad. This congress' doings will kill the Democratic party and we're going to assist the business all we can and get ready to preside at the funeral. Don't know as the Republicans are united on issues, but we're hell on methods. But I tell you, Joe, you want to keep your weather eye open for developments among the people. If I'm not mistaken, a few years will show different issues and maybe new parties, and you want to be onto the racket so as to know which way to jump; but tariff for the people, and 'The Substantial' for We, Us and Co., is the game just now."

CHAPTER XXIV.

WE are in London again, in the apartments of Sir Alfred Gates. Lord Avon has just been ushered in. He offers one hand to his friend while caressing his mustache with the other.

"How are you, Sir Alfred?"

"Splendid; and how is your lordship?"

"Violent, desperate, on the verge of suicide," he said as he dropped into a chair.

"What's the matter; don't your new trousers fit?"

"Worse yet. Just listen to this," and he drew a letter from his pocket. "I will waive all ceremony and plunge right into the business part: 'You have already promised to come, this summer, and accompany us on our summer outing. Now, it is my intention to have a few guests here at my country home for a few weeks, before going to a summer resort. It may be a little lonesome for you here among strangers, so you may bring some friend if you wish, and I assure you that he, as well as yourself, will be most welcome. My sister, Mrs. Daniels, my son and daughter, a friend of the latter, and possibly one or two others, will be here to meet and greet you. Come, if possible, by the twenty-fifth of June,' and so on."

"You ought to be delighted," Sir Alfred ventured to say.

"What! Delighted to be drying up in the backwoods with Saratoga in full blast?"

"But it seems there is to be a sort of house-party."

"Yes, consisting of a homely widow, fifty years old, a boy of twenty or thereabouts, who possesses all the conceit of the typical American, coupled with the arrogance of a congressman's son, and a couple of school girls."

"Well, I say again that you ought to be delighted."

"So I am, so I am," returned his lordship, changing his tactics in an instant, "and I came to delight you by inviting you as the specified friend to go with me."

"But it is a wholly different thing with me. You are going to your betrothed and I should have only the unsatisfactory pleasure of looking on and realizing what I miss."

"But there is Miss Easton's friend. She may be very agreeable, is probably rich, and possibly pretty."

"Yes, she might be all that, but I'm not curious enough to cross the ocean to find out."

"But we will have a perfectly lovely time. America is so different from London. Out in the country there is no constraint; we will be told to make ourselves at home; and we can find the cellar if there is nothing on the sideboard."

"Pardon me," Sir Alfred said, springing up. "Have a glass of wine."

"Thank you," his lordship returned, laughing as he drank. "Then we can have a second dish of pudding and everything to match. There's no limit to liberty in 'the land of the free and the home of the brave.' Why, we can do anything, unless it be to kiss the cook, and we might find something more agreeable to kiss. Do go; what will you do this summer if you don't?"

"When is the wedding to come off?"

"Oh, sometime in the fall—October, I believe. And you always promised to be best man."

"And so I will. I will go over in the ship with the trousseau and be there in plenty of time."

"Well, I don't know what fresh argument to offer," and his lordship actually pulled his mustache in despair.

"Well, cheer up, then; I'll go. I don't mind much

where I am, anyway. 'There's nothing new under the sun.' One might as well watch the world going to hell from that side as this. There's as conclusive evidence there as here, but tell me about their customs; what's expected of one?"

"Why, weren't you there? I thought you figured, or tried to, for a while in American society."

Sir Alfred blushed. "Don't mention it, please. But I might as well admit that I never felt very comfortable over the encounter I had, and I don't believe I fell in with the best society. If I thought you had done no better I would offer you condolence instead of congratulations."

"I don't know what you struck; you have never told me. Anything—ahem—compromising? Ha, ha!"

"No, no," Sir Alfred hastened to say. "Just trades-people, rich, but vulgar. And I thought I was going to have to marry the whole family. Did you ever see anything like the American appetite for titles?"

"I swear I never did. I didn't fare as roughly as you did; but Gad! I was gobbled up the instant I offered myself." Then bethinking himself, his lordship said, "The Eastons are fine people, of course; there are none finer in America. But a new country cannot be expected to display the excellencies of an old established one like ours. You know our turf is the product of centuries, just as we are sprung from a long line of aristocratic ancestry." And he caressed his mustache complacently.

"But society has some kind of requirements. One

doesn't care to run against the merest idiosyncrasies of those with whom he associates. Do the women expect to be flattered as much there as here?"

"They don't resent it, I assure you. You can act just the same there as here, but you mustn't say the same things. It's limb instead of leg; it's the Court here, but the Four Hundred there. You just simply shake hands with everybody, high and low, and offer a cigar if you want to. It isn't likely we'll meet the President at the White House, but if we should be, invited don't get excited; you don't have to tip-toe in, nor back out, nor kiss his hand."

"Oh, thunder, I understand such things. I want to know how to treat the ladies. Do they dance as they do here?"

"Just the same, and their waists are quite as small. You mustn't smoke in the presence of a lady either in the house or in the carriage."

"Now you're coming at it. Keep on."

"Don't ask every lady to drink with you. When you see a woman with a knot of white ribbon on the front of her dress, don't ask her what it means—total abstinence. A yellow one's female suffrage, but if you should meet one of them you wouldn't have to ask; she'd announce her principles at long range. Just make it a rule to be a little cautious at all times."

"Thank you, my lord. I must not ask the ladies indiscriminately to drink; I must not smoke when promenading in the —what do you call it? I must steer clear of the woman's rights advocate, talk about the Four Hundred, and when I want to say leg

I must say him—by the way, how do you spell it?”

“Go on, go on. You’ll pass muster. Oh, we’ll have a glorious time. I tell you, if you want to be drunk mentally, and morally, all summer, just go to Saratoga, and that is probably where they will go. I assure you that Saratoga is right on top; she’s up with Paris, now; in another season she’ll be out of sight. But I must go; I can’t squander time in this way. I will see my tailor and you’d better do the same. We must go well dressed; they know how to dress over there,” his lordship said gayly, as he stepped into the hall.

CHAPTER XXV.

OUR congressman was at home again after another installment of legislative jangling, and was lounging in the library feeling in the best of humor. His daughter, with her friend, would come in a couple of days; the Englishmen would be on hand according to request; while Joe might turn in any minute.

Now our genial, popular legislator was a good, kind father; he loved his sweet daughter and was fond and proud of his Joe. He was also a generous host and meant to entertain his guests in the best style, priding himself with the thought that he would give them a taste of hospitality of the American brand. He had had a tilt with his conscience, as well as with his sister—who was a white ribboner,—on the subject of wine for the guests. He had al-

ways kept wine, but never since the fate of George Sanderson had it been kept on the sideboard or table. Realizing that one might as well offer an Englishman a bed without springs, or a table without legs, as a dinner without wine, he had reasoned with his conscience, overruled Mrs. Daniels' objections, bitter though they were, and ordered his already really fine stock replenished with some of the choicest brands to be had. But for all that, he knew the evils of intemperance and was waiting to have a serious talk with his son. There was a swish and a buzz, and a bicycle stopped at the gate. Joe sprang lightly to the ground and ran to meet his father, who was coming to greet him.

"Hello, Joe, how do you come on?"

"First-rate, Pa. How are you and how did you come out in your last deal?"

"I'm holding on yet; corn will go up, there's such a scarcity of rain."

"Yes, looks like a general drouth. Have you heard from Agnes?"

"Yes, they'll be here day after to-morrow."

"Got second honors, Pa."

"That's good, but come in; I want to have a quiet talk with you."

"What's the matter with out here? There's the hammock for you and I'll take the grass," and suiting the action to the word, he stretched his shapely, athletic legs on the ground and rested his head on his hand.

"Well, you know that we are going to entertain two Englishmen soon."

"Yes."

"Well, I want to entertain them in style; and to do it, must furnish them something to drink."

"Of course."

"And it must be on the sideboard and table; I can't invite them to the cellar."

"Well?"

"Why, Joe, I shall expect you to abstain."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed; it won't do for a young man of your age, who expects to carve out a name for himself, to begin to tip the social glass. In fact, I believe the man who lets the stuff alone without being a crank on the subject, is the most successful. When a man applies for a position, the first question is, 'Does he drink?' There are three things a promising, ambitious young man must avoid."

"What besides wine?"

"Cards, except in a social way; and women without any exceptions. I don't want to exclude all forms of pleasure; you can sow your wild oats, of course—" here the politician floundered.

"Please tell me, my dear father, where I'm to sow my wild oats without wine, women and cards!"

"You can smoke the best cigars and go hunting and fishing all you like, and have all the white breeches you want," the father said very soberly. But Joe laughed aloud; he was anxious to turn the whole thing into a joke.

"I'm in earnest, Joe."

"And—I'm twenty-one, father."

"I know that, and of course you can get into all

the d—d meanness you want to, but I thought I could trust a little to your judgment and common sense.”

Joe sobered at this. He was proud of his distinguished father and proud of the place he held in his father's estimation. “Well, father, I'll promise on the wine question and study about the other. Will you have to go back before our guests arrive?”

“I hope not. I won't unless they wire me that I'm needed;” and as they sauntered toward the house he added, “Remember, Joe, I don't object to an innocent flirtation. Here, have a smoke.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

COMMENCEMENT was over at the seminary and the students were in the delightful confusion of leave-taking. Our girls were up before daylight, having been unable to sleep much. In fact Agnes had not slept at all and Helen's fitful slumber had, at an early hour, terminated in a dream of personal conquest in the Mother Country—having forced the Britishers to acquiesce to a bimetallic standard. This waked her up ready for the work at hand.

Before long the whole dormitory was awake. There was a constant opening and shutting of doors; trunks and boxes were dragged into the hall. Clatter and chatter reigned everywhere; and Agnes and Helen did their share to make the din a merry one. Helen seemed to have forgotten this ever-dying world, cap-

ital and labor, repeal of the purchasing clause, tariff and the thousand other subjects she was wont to spend much breath and energy upon. She had either dropped with enthusiasm into the ordinary rôle of woman, that of contemplating flirtation and conquests, or she was playing her part well.

"Here, Agnes, will you button my dress? I didn't think three months ago that I'd ever be fool enough to have a dress that buttoned under the arm. What a nuisance they are, and mercy, how tight!" she said with a half scowl as Agnes proceeded.

"No, it's not very tight; it's just the stays that make it stiff."

"Well, I couldn't handle the dumb-bells in this."

"It won't be necessary. You won't even have to walk without support when you are with his lordship; Englishmen are so much politer than Americans—at least they make a greater ado over things."

"It's the latter, I think. There's an Englishman back home who came over when he was only twelve years old, and he can't bend his head to spit without a flourish, and his manner is so obsequious that he absolutely seems to be deferential to fence posts, doorsills and the like. And he's only an ordinary man, so I sha'n't be surprised if his lordship is much more elaborate. You say he has curly hair?"

"Yes, such beautiful hair; as fine and soft as your own, and the finest mustache I ever saw. And so handsome! Oh, Helen! I just know that you will marry him and go to England, and I won't see you again."

"Maybe not, Agnes."

"Oh, aren't you in earnest with me?"

"Yes, Agnes, I am in earnest with you. Now I will go and say good-bye to Cleonice."

But Cleonice was gone, having left on the midnight train, leaving a short farewell note for Helen, which was handed her by Miss Martin. Helen read it and returned in a preoccupied state of mind to her room, where she sat silent until train-time, much to the discomfiture of Agnes.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JOE met the girls at the end of their journey. "My, ain't she a stunner!" he said under his breath, as soon as Helen appeared on the car platform. "She'll rattle that dude all right."

Helen and Joe readily became acquainted, and before the first day was over had had a race on their wheels, and a political scrap, in which both claimed the victory.

But now the evening of the twenty-fifth had come. Agnes had finally stopped fussing over Helen's hair, had pinned flowers in the meshes of the lace at her throat, and pronounced her perfect. Joe scowled as they entered the parlors. "Togged up for the foreigners! Pa and I haven't seen anything but plain brown or gray duds," and Joe turned to go in disgust.

"Don't go off, Joe; I'm horribly nervous; stay and see the thing through and lend your assistance, if necessary, as every American should," Agnes pleaded.

"A true American doesn't amount to anything in the eyes of the American women."

"I don't know the kind of women you have been brought in contact with, but I know they have not been of my stamp," Helen said decidedly.

"I hope you will prove your patriotism in deeds," Joe said, somewhat mollified. He was forgetting his game, it seemed. "Let's walk out to the gate, Miss Herman, and watch for the carriage. You will have plenty of time to run back without being seen."

"Oh, Helen, don't go; you will get your dress mussed and your flowers all every way," Agnes said.

But Helen went. The house stood quite a distance back from the road and the walk and the excitement brought the color to her cheeks and a brilliancy to her eyes. Joe thought her magnificent and said gallantly, "What if the roses at your throat are wilted? they are fresh enough in your cheeks, and such beautiful eyes; by heaven!"

"Yes, indeed," Helen said with affected earnestness which completely dumfounded Joe.

"You can't make fun of me," he stammered.

"Nor you of me."

"Oh, confound it, Miss Herman, I don't understand you at all."

"Well, I don't understand you."

"How? What? Explain yourself."

"Why, you are a bright, generous, whole-souled boy, who, from a mistaken idea of gallantry, has started on the road to moral ruin by being insincere."

"By Jove, Miss Herman, you're an oddity. I thought women liked flattery."

"We like honest praise from honest hearts, but detest flippant compliments."

"By Jings, I *do* like you, Helen."

"There, Joe, well said; you meant that. And I like you, for I know the conventional veneer isn't very thick on you and you really enjoy being sincere."

"Oh, Lord, yes," Joe said fervently. "Hark, take to your legs, the carriage is nearly here."

Joe shook hands with the guests at the gate, and, together with his father, escorted them into the house. As they entered the parlor, Mrs. Daniels and Agnes went forward to meet them, while Helen stood in the background. Her heart fluttered strangely, for after all a man is a man, whether an American or not. Here Helen was brought forward to meet them and say her little speech.

The Englishmen could scarcely refrain from interchanging looks, for all three of the women wore the white ribbon. Lucky it was that Helen had not worn the badge of yellow. Her supply had been too soiled for her costume and Agnes had had none to replace it. It was an awkward moment, and after they were all seated, it was worse.

Our congressman cudgeled his brains for a topic that would be suitable to all, but in vain. Had he been alone with them he could have sprung American politics, "our securities abroad" or some such subject, but it was obviously out of place on this occasion. Finally Joe asked if they had had a pleasant voyage, which started a conversation which hung on in some sort of fashion until supper was announced.

When asked which he and his friend preferred,

cards or dancing, his lordship inquired what American ladies played.

"Oh, they don't play baccarat, but they are often quite good at whist or pedro." Joe had gotten it into his head that baccarat was the English national game.

"There are hardly enough of us to dance," his lordship ventured, utterly ignoring Joe's remark.

"But we can waltz. Your Lordship is a good waltzer and Miss Herman wants to learn, don't you, Helen?" Agnes said.

"Oh, yes, indeed." So Agnes played and his lordship led Helen forth. The host engaged Sir Alfred in conversation and poor Joe was left to himself. He turned the photographs and fumbled with some books, feeling altogether disgusted and miserable. Helen had been very nice to him all evening and he had felt much elated until she evinced such a readiness to dance with his lordship. "I can waltz as well as he, but she never offered to learn of me," he said to himself. It was all right for him and his father to lay the plot, but for the girls to walk into it so readily was strange, he thought. He wasn't so much surprised at Agnes, for he understood her feeling for George Sanderson, but for Helen, such a girl as Helen Herman, to be so delighted with the homage of a foreigner was hard to understand.

"It must be that such hair and mustache are fatal when such a girl succumbs," he concluded. Joe was secretly envious of his lordship's attractiveness, especially of the mustache.

When the evening was over and all had gone to their rooms, Agnes went and tapped at Joe's door

"What is it, sis?" he said upon opening the door.

"Oh, nothing. I just thought I'd drop in a little while."

"Well, I was just thinking of dropping into bed, but sit down, I'm not sleepy. By Jove, how well Miss Herman looked to-night! and she seemed to be flattered by that—"

"His lordship's attentions," Agnes said eagerly; "and he seems to be struck with her."

"He certainly wasn't struck blind. Englishmen do lack in delicacy."

"Oh, Joe, foreigners are as good as our own countrymen. One always has a weakness for one's own country, but after all, a man's a man wherever he is."

"And a jackass is a jackass wherever he is, and that's his lordship every time; but patriotism isn't patriotism when it wants to swell in with some other country. She talks patriotic enough and I'd formed a great opinion of her, but I'm cooked now. She didn't don pink silk for us. Oh, she'll prove herself as conceited and as—as—ambitious, as they call it, as anybody, after all. Yes, I am satisfied that she will prove to be utterly devoid of patriotism, sense and everything else; she's just an empty shell."

"Oh, shame upon you! She's just the best girl I ever knew. I know she is a little queer on religion and politics, but she has got a good big heart and she would do anything for a friend."

"Oh, yes. She's sharp enough to take you in."

"I can't bear to hear you talk so about her. You don't know her as I do. She is going to—to—"

"Well, to what?"

"Why, she's going to—to—"

"For God's sake Agnes, can't you talk?"

"Well, you know I don't want to marry his lordship, and she is going to flirt with him and give me a chance to break the engagement. Oh, Joe, she is going to marry him so I won't have to."

"What a martyr she is!"

"I hope not, Joe; I hope she will fall in love with him, and I know he will with her. She is so beautiful he scarcely took his eyes off her to-night."

"And did you tell her the secret of how to keep her face and arms white, that she is under such obligations to you?"

"Why, don't you remember the storm, Joe? I wrote papa all about it. I helped to save Helen's life."

"That makes the thing a little different." But Joe was still doubtful and vexed. Of course he had been fooled, he thought. It had seemed to him too strange to be true, that she should be what she professed—any girl that wouldn't be mashed on that hair and mustache was simply a freak.

Agnes reassured him concerning the import of Helen's actions, and went to her room.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HELEN was perhaps the only one of the party who was having a really good time. Here she was having opportunity to display all of her many phases. When in a careless mood she flirted with his lordship; when

thoughtful she talked religion and science with Sir Alfred; a patriotic mood brought her to talk politics with the congressman; and when burning with ambition she found a congenial spirit in Joe, who, while often disagreeing with her, still liked her comradeship.

At first Sir Alfred was awfully bored. He thought Agnes a sweet, modest little woman, as became her, but she was supposed to be his friend's special companion. He liked Mrs. Daniels, approved of her care of the young ladies and the house. Now, Mrs. Daniels was a hygienist, very particular about diet and clothing; was always looking after the health of the household; saw that the girls didn't put on freshly ironed linen nor eat between meals; attended to the ventilation yet never allowed, a draught. In short, she was one of those women who have a bad stomach and a vivid imagination, and having to regulate her own diet, she simply couldn't see how any one could live and eat anything and everything. But Sir Alfred saw only that she was careful and prudent. One afternoon the young people, with the exception of his lordship, were seated in the shade upon the lawn. That personage, thrown upon his own resources in the matter of making himself presentable, consumed a good deal of time and experienced a good deal of trouble with his toilet; and at this time was struggling to decide which would be most becoming, a pale pink or a creamy white necktie.

"I don't object to suffrage so very much," Sir Alfred was saying, "but with suffrage comes woman politicians, lawyers, doctors, preachers, lecturers, usurpers of man's sphere."

"The world is progressing," Helen said calmly.

"Yes, the world is going—going—mad."

"Sir Alfred, you, like thousands of others, understand that the world is running in a strange way, but cannot see the cause. We are going with the current, after a phantom, and though it is but a phantom, we could not turn back if we would. The current grows stronger and more rapid; some are floating idly, carelessly along, bravely buffeting the waves, but the greater number are grabbing, crying, cursing, sinking or rising by pushing others under. There is not room for all; the banks are narrowing; an eddy starts in the center; we reel as if drunken, we speed round, dizzy, breathless, faint, exhausted; none have gained, all have lost. And that phantom is wealth and power."

"Yes, that is true. But the women are largely responsible for the condition of things; if they would keep to the shore and leave the men to struggle with the current, why—"

"What is to be will be. If you would study the Bible, you would see that the world is in just the condition that Christ spoke of as the time of the end." Here, as if to contradict in living, glowing colors, Helen's dark prophecy, his lordship appeared on the scene fresh as a new blown rose and certainly more fragrant, a happy, careless smile on his handsome face. Upon seeing him advance toward them, Sir Alfred began to gently swing the hammock Helen was occupying, reconciling the action with the thought that it wasn't best for his friend to pay too much attention to one girl when betrothed to another. Con-

tinuing the conversation, though in a gayer manner, he said, "Look here, Miss Herman, you're always quoting Scripture to prove your theories, and yet you don't believe much that's in the Bible; old-fashioned hell and other things that are as plain as can be. Your belief is nothing but a theory that, like any other one, can be either proved or disproved by the Bible."

"I know it is but a theory. I wouldn't give two cents for a person without a theory; but the thing of it is, which theory is the most reasonable."

"Your argument sounds very reasonable, Miss Herman," his lordship, who had been listening a few seconds, said, "but now let us try some of God's pure air and sunshine. What do you say to a race on the wheels?"

"Capital," Helen said, rising and excusing herself. A few moments later they were skimming down the smooth road. Helen wore her gymnasium costume, but his lordship either didn't notice it or he didn't care.

"How I do enjoy bicycling!" she said.

"So do I when I have good company," he returned, guiding his wheel a little nearer her. Agnes had casually told him of Helen's three millions, and this, coupled with Helen's charming personnel, was rapidly getting away with his lordship. He calculated in his quiet moments to simply flirt with her as was his wont with any young woman, but her power over him when they were together made his speech a queer mixture of flattery and sincerity.

"And I'm certainly enjoying this ride," he con-

tinued. "The exercise brings roses to your cheeks and your eyes are like stars."

"Oh, Your Lordship thinks he can flatter an innocent country girl."

"'Pon my honor, no. Your innocence only makes you that much more lovely in the sight of a gentleman. It's rarely we meet with such charming simplicity; and a man whose every breath you might say has been drawn in society's hot-house, knows how to appreciate that nature which is yet untainted."

Helen's face was turned away. She felt an almost uncontrollable desire to call him a fool, but, remembering her part, she turned her face toward him, beaming with the most vacant smile she could muster.

"My Lord has no idea how much I appreciate his candid expression of regard for me."

"A man would be a brute who would deceive such innocence as yours." They rode in silence for a few minutes and then he asked her if she had ever been to England.

"No," she answered, "I've never traveled, even in my own country. I've been in school nearly all of my life; and I'm an orphan, and friendless girls like myself have so little chance to go about."

"But an orphan girl can find a protector in a husband as well as a girl blessed with parents."

"Well, I've never been fortunate or unfortunate enough to. But we are a long distance from home. Hadn't we better turn back?" And during the remainder of the trip Helen adroitly kept the conversation upon the topic of scenery, allowing nothing but the lightest sort of flirtation.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HELEN boasted the understanding of a vast number of subjects, but she was beginning to wonder if she understood herself. Her whole life had been spent in dreams of ambition, of glory, and she had always looked upon society as the amusement of fools and of course not for her. She had never known but two people with whom she could really affiliate, Cleonice and an old man, a recluse scholar in her own home, until now, when she found the society of each one of the party enjoyable. She liked the light, frivolous nature of Lord Avon, when he talked of something other than herself, and even his adoration of her, which was becoming evident to everybody, interested her when she thought how well her scheme was working. She liked to slip into the library when the host was at home and tease him on politics until he would put her out bodily and lock the door. And Sir Alfred—well, she never feigned headache when he asked her to walk or ride, nor ever overslept when challenged by him to a six o'clock game of croquet. But it was with Joe that she felt most like herself. After they had had a long confidential talk about their ambitions, she would feel herself equal to anything; and in her own room would sing, dance, declaim and execute high tragedy with even more than her old-time gusto. Upon one such occasion as she was reciting her favorite portion of the Iliad, where the haughty Atrides demands Achilles to surrender Briseis, it popped into her head to dramatize the Iliad.

“And I mustn’t moon much longer,” she said aloud, and fell to calculating how much longer it would take to effect Agnes’ release. She felt provoked at herself for entering into such an agreement. “Wasting time when I know my power. My teacher assured me that I had ‘the voice that all modes of passion could express,’ and I can, oh, I can—” here her thoughts became too ecstatic for utterance as she again indulged in the ambitious dreams of the natural actor.

“I’ll look for a position right away and go as soon as I can. It’s pleasant here, but it’s too enervating,” she had decided, when happening to look out of the window she saw Sir Alfred sitting alone on the lawn. Recalling an interrupted conversation on Darwinism in which she had not time to make herself clear, she, after rearranging her hair and donning fresh flowers, joined him.

At that moment Agnes was giving her aunt, who was subject to a nervous dizzy headache, an ice water treatment. “Wouldn’t it be nice, Agnes,” said Mrs. Daniels, as she saw Sir Alfred rise to give Helen the hammock, “if they would fall in love?”

“Oh, Auntie, do you think they will?” Agnes asked, trying to conceal her anxiety.

“There is a possibility,” Mrs. Daniels returned complacently. “He is a very fine man and it would be very fortunate for her to get any one of his age and judgment. She is attractive and sensible in some ways, but is young and has never had the care of a mother. I do wish she would wear a night-cap; can’t you persuade her to? Jennie says she draws her bed

right up to the window and sleeps with her head against the screen; why she doesn't catch her death of cold, I can't see. Girls are so imprudent."

"But he is so much older," Agnes remonstrated.

"Yes, but when men reach his age, unmarried, they nearly always marry young women, which isn't always prudent in the man, but very fortunate for the girl. I think if there is anything disgusting, it's to see very young people marry, for what do they know about taking care of children or living on their income? But Sir Alfred and his lordship are about the same age, I should judge, and Helen is older than you. Have you decided about your dress yet?"

"No, not yet. Please don't worry about it; there is plenty of time. If your head is better, Auntie, I believe I will go out in the open air."

"Go on, dear, but throw something light over your shoulders and take something to Helen. That great maple throws such a shade that it is positively chilly under it."

Agnes, whose anxiety was increased by seeing Sir Alfred gently swinging the hammock, was glad of this excuse to break up the *tête-à-tête*; so, picking up a cashmere shawl for herself and a flimsy lace scarf for Helen, she joined them only to find them arguing upon evolution.

"But Darwin demonstrates everything so clearly," Sir Alfred was saying.

"Yes, I know he does, and I can readily see how a skeptical person would accept his theory unquestioned."

"But he has left no room for question."

"No, not if one accepts his premise. But the idea that everything started from one of four forms of life is absurd to me. Now, a thousand primary forms are as easy to suppose as four or just one. Don't you think he begs the question?"

"Then you think Darwin and Wallace spent their whole lives concocting an illogical theory?"

"I think if we study the Bible we find something much more simple, reasonable and that which satisfies the heart."

"But there is as great, yes, greater diversity of opinions in regard to Bible teachings than there are differences among scientists."

Sir Alfred knew nothing about the Bible and really cared nothing about Darwinism, but he availed himself of every opportunity to talk with Helen on any subject.

"But one can't estimate the worth of the Bible from simply an intellectual standpoint," she rejoined. "Its truths must be experienced, just as we put our arithmetical training into practice to understand it fully. Fractions nearly drove me crazy when a child; they were simply inexplicable until I was sent marketing; and geometry and surveying are misty to me yet, just because I can't go out with tripod and chain. When one looks about and notes how man is conquering everything and making even electricity serve his purpose, and especially when an individual studies his own abilities and powers, he sees that it is true that God placed him at the head of his creation to have dominion over all things. Yet there are some who believe, or profess to believe,

that man came up from amœbæ. Truly 'they strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.' But then it is the easiest thing in the world to be skeptical. I used to be." Sir Alfred smiled. "But I was finally convinced, not by scholarly argument nor in a revival meeting—" Here Helen paused

"But how were you convinced?" Sir Alfred asked.

"Such incidents have been related in the pulpit until people have grown to think lightly of them, but this I saw with my own eyes and not only that, but felt it in my soul." Helen's manner was so earnest and her voice so low and clear, that her listeners were deeply moved. "I once stood by the deathbed of a young and beautiful girl, and just a few moments before she died her pale, wan face became so strangely radiant, her eyes so luminous and wondrously beautiful, that we stood breathless with expectation. Well, I can not describe; it is beyond words. The skeptic might say it was the last effort of nature, just as the candle will blaze up just before it goes out, but we who stood beside her realized that we looked upon the soul's awakening."

CHAPTER XXX.

SIR ALFRED found himself strangely attracted to Helen. Her variegated nature was an ever-increasing wonder and delight to him who had grown distrustful of nearly everything. But

"The thickest ice that ever froze
Can only o'er the surface close,
The quickening stream still flows beneath."

He began to think that there were women in the world, who, if not of the trusting, confiding, Alice Darvil sort, were yet true women with pure, noble sentiments. Yet, while he admired Helen in her argumentative moods, 'twas in her lighter rôle that he most loved her. And his lordship was fairly distracted. Three million dollars that could be had for the asking, and a lovely girl thrown in; an orphan, too, without a brother to treat him half disdainfully, or a father to suspect him of being a fortune hunter and a libertine! But his environment aggravated him awfully. Of course he could not claim any of Helen's time, but just had to trust to happy intervals and lucky chance; and such were all too rare, even when he was ready to improve them. Oh, how he missed Adams! for looking after his clothes, going every morning to the village to be shaved, and struggling before the mirror to make himself presentable, took so much time that he felt himself not "in it" like the others; he was jealous of Sir Alfred, jealous of the supercilious Joe, and even jealous of his genial host.

One day when he was trying with nervous fingers to girt his snow-white trousers to just the right length, he heard Helen's laughter and Sir Alfred's voice below. He gave way to profuse perspiration and red-hot regrets. Something of relief came to him, however, when he ascertained that the whole household, including Mrs. Daniels, with head bundled up, secure against a possible draught, were upon the lawn.

"The day of flowery oratory is past," the congressman was saying.

"Yes, we have come to the day and age of the world when things must be said and done simply and quickly," Sir Alfred rejoined.

"And the man who soars on the pinions of the wind is a dolt," interposed Joe.

"I don't agree with any of you," Helen said. She always wanted to have her say. "We don't admire the simple things of life; it's the display, the splendor, the pageantry; that which delights the senses. We admire the smooth, prepossessing rascal more than a common every-day villain. Now, don't we?"

"It isn't the villain, but his graces that charm us," Agnes said, half timidly.

"But all of our best writers, whether of prose or of poetry, have soared in imagery and flowery language. Look at the Iliad, the grandest of all poetry; reduce it to simple language and would it appeal to us as it does now? Take some of Byron's poetry, for instance this:

"Thou glorious mirror! where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time
Calm or convulsed—in breeze or gale or storm,
Icing the pole or in the torrid clime,
Dark, heaving, boundless, endless and sublime,
The image of eternity—the throne
Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made; each one
Obeys thee—thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone."

Reduce that to simple language and see if it means the same."

"But that is poetry," our congressman said.

"Yes, and I don't like to hear anything said in a plain way that can be rendered poetically. Our lives

are too prosy. I think we would do well to cultivate poetry in both thought and speech."

"You are right in one way, Miss Herman," the host answered. "We are not exactly prosy, but we lack sentiment. Sentiment is dubbed 'gush' to-day. Oh, the whole world is wrong somewhere. There's a mighty big screw loose somewhere, and the machinery is rattling away at a terrible speed. The world is—" Here he looked at his watch, sprang up suddenly, and taking Joe to one side whispered, "Jump on your wheel, Joe, and hurry to town; the market closed fifteen minutes ago. Be quick; I'll stand here at the gate."

Here Mrs. Daniels, seeing a chance to leave Helen and Sir Alfred together, arose and went into the house, and a moment later called the reluctant Agnes. Poor Lord Avon, who had just succeeded in getting one trouser leg just right, must yet fix the other one and arrange his tie! How could he know that they were talking only economics?

"It's a very difficult question," continued Helen. "The wrong is in our hearts; we are hard-hearted and selfish."

"Because a man occupies himself in making money, looking after his financial affairs, he is hard-hearted and selfish, is he? And yet I've heard you say you despise a lazy fellow, me, for instance," Sir Alfred said, smiling, but watching her face.

"I don't like to see a man put his every thought and energy into making a fortune. He ought to think some upon other things, I don't care what, but something that will mark him as a man with thoughts

and feelings. I despise a man who is merely a machine to make money."

"But we all bow down to the rich man."

"We do not. Maybe you do over in England, but it is not so here in Democratic America. Our rich men are just now being censured for reducing the wages of their employees."

"It is common in all countries for a man to hire cheap labor."

"Yes, I know that. We will pay a dollar if we must, but will get the same work done for twenty-five cents if possible. And yet the conditions of the late strikers is comfort itself compared with other classes,—the women employed in sweaters' establishments and the children in the crowded factories."

"Well, Miss Herman, we must take into consideration the worth of these laborers. Isn't it the truth that merit wins? These people are mere machines. If they were worth more they would rise higher. Isn't it true that a bright boy will begin work as an office boy and rise to be a member of the firm? You see he has true worth, and makes himself indispensable to his employers. But these poor, miserable wretches of whom you speak, must either live and die on the pittance they receive or rise and prove themselves worthy."

"It is like placing a man in a skiff in the middle of the Pacific, and expecting him to get to shore. One out of a million might succeed, but starvation, the hurricane, and torture and death at the hands of savages, would be the common fate. Sir Alfred, you are a scholar,—a well-read man. Is it possible that

you are blind to the conditions as they are to-day? Can't you see the signs of the times point to something—to the last great day when Christ's Kingdom shall be set up on earth?" Helen said in deep earnestness, but seeing a faint smile flickering over the face of her companion, she leaned back, clasped her hands above her head and defiantly said, "Laugh right out, Sir Alfred, I don't mind it at all."

"Thank you for according me the privilege, but I don't care to take advantage of it. You see a man of my age has heard all sorts of theories for the redemption of the human race. There are all sorts of enthusiasts, but you are the first young woman I've ever known to go so deeply, and I must say, with such sincerity of purpose, into such schemes. I've heard middle-aged and old women, and disappointed men talk such things; one of their favorite notions being to divide up the wealth into equal portions. But the time has never been, and I think never will be, when men will be dictated to as to how they will spend their money, or as to what they will do with their own possessions."

"That idea has not held good in the past."

"How so?"

"Why, England once owned the American colonies, but she failed to do as she pleased with them. I should think that an immortal precedent."

"That was a great political question."

"But so is the capital and labor question becoming national, yes, an international question. Just as negro slavery was put down, so will the bondage of the white laborers be taken in hand and abolished."

Sir Alfred floundered and positively blushed. No man likes to be beaten by a woman. But Sir Alfred would not acknowledge himself beaten, even to himself, and, feeling rather short of off-hand arguments, he sought to side-track the discussion by remarking in a careless way, "Well, I don't care to worry myself about it; I'll leave it to *older* and wiser heads than mine."

Helen understood the insinuation. It raised her temper and she wanted to stab back. "I am very sure that the cause will never miss you," she said sweetly.

Sir Alfred writhed inwardly. It was strange to him how the words of this little girl, as he had first considered her, could affect him. But a moment since he had thrilled with pride that she had considered him scholarly, and now his heart ached. And here, to add to his misery, his lordship, fresh and handsome, came upon the scene and took Helen for a ride.

"Do you know yet where they are going to take us for the summer?" Helen asked, as they wheeled along.

"No; I think, though, it will be Saratoga. Are you getting tired of the country? You are certainly not as happy as I am or you would not even hint at such a thing."

"Oh, I am happy here. They are all so kind. Mrs. Daniels takes the liveliest interest in me, health and all; Agnes is like a sister, Mr. Easton is like a father; Joe is devoted and your friend is very nice to me."

"And haven't you one poor little word for me?"

His lordship asked dejectedly. And Helen, recalling his gifts of bon-bons, his little polite services, and also remembering her part, said, "I didn't say anything in praise of you, my lord, because I simply can't express my thanks to you in words—oh, I mean I can't express my thanks at all," she quickly explained, feeling a little guilty. "But I'm in for it; I don't have to marry him and it's for Agnes' welfare," she said mentally. "I wish I could show my admiration for you in either words or acts."

His lordship sighed. Gay, good-natured Lord Avon was quite upset. "Dear Miss Herman, I was grieved at you the other day; I really was, but perhaps I misunderstood you. One so just and good and noble as you could not believe such a thing."

"Why, what was it?"

"You were talking with the young Mr. Easton. I wasn't eavesdropping, but I thought I heard you declare against the marriage of your countrymen with foreigners. Why, I think all homage is due the American woman who leaves all, her country, her parents and friends, to follow the man of her choice to Spain, to France, to dear old England. I hope you are not like the woman who said that she could be convinced, but she'd like to see the man who could convince her."

Conquering her disgust she ventured, "I have never yet met the man who cared to trouble himself enough about me, to try to convince me."

His lordship was almost desperate; he talked about 'merciless fate' and groaned audibly. Helen was greatly relieved at their nearing home, which caused his lordship to regain his composure.

That night Agnes followed Helen to her room. When the door was closed and they were alone Agnes threw her arms around her friend's neck and exclaimed, "Bless your dear heart, you are a friend indeed; and if I were at all in love I should be furiously jealous. I am going to give back this ring tomorrow. He adores you; oh, Helen; I'm almost ashamed to say so, but he never treated me one-half so nice as he does you. I could almost believe he never did care for me, and yet he must have; oh, I can't understand it all."

"Do you know where we are going for the summer?"

"No, papa will decide in a day or two. For my part I don't care much where we go, but Aunt Kate thinks the water at Saratoga beneficial. I'll just tell you the truth, Helen; I like fun and want to have a good time, but Saratoga is a bad place. Why, nearly everybody drinks and gambles, and you mix with everybody, good, bad and indifferent; you must sit at tables with women you would not speak to at home."

"I know it isn't pleasant, but that's the very place to set an example."

"You might as well throw a reed into the Mississippi to obstruct its progress. And you can scarcely brace yourself, much less tower in strength. I tell you the wickedness is positively contagious."

"Will your father be there with us?"

"I hope so, at least for a part of the time. Isn't it awful that congress must be in session all summer?"

"It's awful that men of the same party, elected on the same ticket, will pull and haul in different directions, when they are honor bound to work for the same things. When women go to congress they'll work for principle regardless of personal interests. Honestly, Agnes, don't you ever wish that you could fill some office of public trust?"

"No, not exactly. I think we have as good a chance to do good by using our influence in other things. I have sometimes thought I would like to be married and go to Saratoga to show other women that one woman could think more of her own husband than of some other woman's."

"That is right enough, Agnes, but every married woman can do that, and so few women hold offices of trust."

"Well, let women who are capable of holding office, and who wish to, do so, but as for me, I don't crave any such distinction. It is different with you, Helen. I would like to see you happily married, as you surely will be soon, but still I think you capable of other things. I must go now and not keep you up any longer."

A few minutes after she had gone, Helen received a note which read:

"I challenge you to a game of croquet at half past six in the morning. Don't fail me. GATES."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE next morning Helen awakened before six and rose immediately. More than once while she was dressing did she peep out from behind the shade, and it wasn't long until she saw Sir Alfred emerge from the hall door and go toward the croquet ground. At fifteen minutes past six she was ready and sat down to read, but five minutes of time seemed an age, and so a little earlier than the appointed hour she joined him below.

"Good morning, Miss Herman. So you concluded to give me a game, did you? I was awfully afraid you would prefer to sleep."

"I will give you a chance for a game," she said, as she took the mallet he held out to her.

"That is all I want," he returned, letting his hand slide down the handle and cover hers. Here this self-willed, ambitious young woman who thought love a weakness, blushed as red as the roses at her throat, stammered, but did not try to free her hand. "Would you like to have my mallet as well as your own?" she finally managed to say.

"Oh, no," he said, releasing her, and the game began. The conversation was a little strained at first, until they fell to talking about where the party would spend the summer.

"Miss Easton told me last night that she thought her father would decide this week. Lord Avon prefers Newport, but Mrs. Daniels would rather go to Saratoga. Nobody else seems to care."

"Have you no preference?" he asked, and looked at her while he tried to send the ball through the basket.

"I want to go where there will be the most good theaters."

"But there won't be any theaters anywhere during the summer."

"What?"

"There aren't any theaters anywhere during the summer."

"Why?"

"All good players rest during the hot weather like other people. Sometimes a cheap troupe stays on the road, but the artists are off recuperating."

"Then what on earth do people amuse themselves with at watering places?"

"At Long Branch they bathe, go to church, play games and dance. At Newport they do the same, and at Saratoga they go to the races and bet instead of bathe, dance, drink, play games and flirt; at least I have heard so from my friend, who has visited all the principal summer resorts here. This is my first stay in America, and it was with reluctance that I agreed to come this time, but I'm glad now that I did; I wouldn't have missed it for a fortune," and he looked at her again and missed the stake. "So you haven't gone about much, it seems."

"No, I've never been anywhere but in school. I've never heard any good actors."

"Several American artists are spending the season in England."

"Playing?"

"No, just traveling and having a good time. They seem to prefer our society and scenery. American women like England."

"Yes, and not to their credit," Helen said decidedly, trying to be true to her ideas of patriotism.

"How so?"

"Why, it's disgusting for Americans to spend half their time in other countries. I intend to travel, but I shall do my own country first, and return to it gladly after seeing the sights elsewhere. She's faulty enough, Heaven knows, but she's the very best of a bad lot."

"When do you intend to travel?"

"Just as soon as I am of age and get control of my own property."

"And get a husband," Sir Alfred said, missing the stake for the third time.

"Yes."

Sir Alfred was nonplussed. His face grew very sober and he finally said, "Pardon me, Miss Herman, but I was not aware that you were contemplating matrimony."

"Well, I'm not and don't intend to."

"I hope you are not of the class who are crying down matrimony."

"No, I'm not of that class, at least not that I know of, for I don't know of any such, except as I read of them. But to-day woman's chief aim is not marriage, as it used to be. We are taught to think of other things."

"Yes, they are being trained to stifle nature," he almost snapped. "They are taught to make prudent

marriages, to look at the financial status of a suitor instead of at his mind and heart."

"It strikes me that a good many women are married to men who are bankrupt in every way. And from the number of divorces, one would judge that nature had been having its own way; people must have been listening to their hearts instead of being guided by common sense."

Helen's sarcasm seemed insult added to injury and he broke into a series of expostulations that he would have readily seen to be illogical and inconsistent in any one else. "No, nature was all right in the first place; nature was all right; the heart was all right. They were led away by their ambitions; they go after your phantom riches and power, the two principal producers of corruption. True nature is all right after it has received its education and polish; it's the counterfeit natures that are making the trouble. The rough and gross are being veneered and mixed in with the naturally refined. Fifty years ago things were not as they are to-day."

"Haven't I been telling you so all along? Things are coming to a climax and the 'end is nigh, even at the doors!' Oh, can't you see? but no, 'you have eyes, but you see not, ears and you hear not,'" Helen said hopelessly.

"I've eyes that can see, and a heart that can feel," he said, looking longingly at her.

But Helen with the greatest indifference rolled her ball around and began a new game. Sir Alfred dropped his ball in place and struck it with such vengeance that it rolled clear through the central

arches and struck the lower stake with a pop. "Education is the ruin of the world instead of its redemption. The higher education is responsible for the attitude of women toward marriages and has dissatisfied her with home life."

"I know," Helen said, her tone as sweet as sugared gooseberries, "I know there are some who honestly think that women should not receive the higher education, but that we should spend our lives quietly within the four walls of home in perfect contentment. That may have been very well when men belonged to that order known as 'Nature's noblemen,' but now when men are corrupt, from tramp to President, and when most of them shift the responsibility of making a living upon their wives, things are different. Somebody's got to take hold of affairs and straighten them out. The poverty question is staring this nation in the face and the men won't or can't remedy the matter. Those in power won't even consider it. The women must come to the front if our nation is to stand, and they must fit themselves for positions of trust and not enter into any 'entangling alliances.'"

Sir Alfred was in a perfect rage. To be preached at like this when he was on the point of proposing! His face was flushed, and he played as if he wanted to smash everything, but Helen, perfectly calm, seeming not to notice his actions, stood waiting her turn. Just at this critical moment his lordship's curls hove in sight. Helen's face wreathed in smiles, and Sir Alfred, dropping his mallet, hurried to her, and said, "It is necessary for me to go to town this forenoon. Would you care to bear me company?"

Helen had maintained her ground so far with only one blush to prove that she was woman, and she determined to show no weakness at the last moment; so looking up, but not into his face, replied, "I must go to town this forenoon myself, as I have an appointment with my dressmaker, but I promised his lordship last night that I would go with him."

"So I suppose you will devote the remainder of the day to him."

"Oh, no, just the forenoon. I am going to the woods with Joe this afternoon, and you know our host arrives this evening."

"Good morning, Miss Herman. You folks are out fearfully early, aren't you?" hailed his lordship.

"Yes, I've just been giving your friend a lesson in croquet. It seems as if he doesn't understand it very well."

"Neither do I; give me lessons. I like croquet because it can be played by two."

"Well, sometime, but we must go in to breakfast now."

In a short time his lordship, Helen and Agnes started to town, leaving Sir Alfred to either endure Joe or amuse himself. His lordship, while not really slighting Agnes, was so profusely gallant to Helen that both girls felt that the time to break had come, and Agnes began nerving herself for the ordeal.

After dinner Joe brought out the wheels, and very important he felt as he led Helen past the English guests.

"You have been away a good deal lately, I hardly ever see you," said Helen.

"Yes, but I'll be at home most of the time from now on. Pa got the nomination, you know. I've been tending to his affairs."

"Will you work in the campaign?"

"No, I will play host at the resort, and then will start to school."

"Why, I thought you graduated."

"Yes, but this is a law school. You know a politician must be a lawyer."

"And should women politicians study law?"

"It isn't absolutely necessary; but there are few members of congress who are not lawyers, nor hardly any public men, for that matter."

"Well, I shall read law, then, but I don't intend spending three or four years more in school. I've made other plans."

"Do tell me what they are. I haven't talked with you for so long that I expect you have revised them a good deal."

"I've been wanting to talk with you; you understand me so well. I've decided to go on the stage pretty soon—this fall if I can get a place; I'll try the boards for a while, and then I am going to dramatize the Iliad and start a company of my own."

"What's that got to do with law?" Joe exclaimed.

"Just wait. You know I will have my property in my own hands soon, and I intend investing in land and starting a coöperative manufacturing industry. Of course that will make me popular near home. Then everybody will want to see the famous actress and the woman who dramatized the Iliad. I will get lots of free advertising and a race for congress will be easily made."

"Quite a brilliant career you've mapped out for yourself. I think you'll be a successful actress; you will probably become a star, unless you conclude to star in some nice fellow's home."

"Now, you know, Joe, that I should be totally eclipsed moving in the domestic orbit. The Iliad can be dramatized; I've got it outlined already. Oh, it's the very scheme."

"You may be all right about doing it and, as I said, you will probably succeed on the stage, unless you conclude to grace some lucky fellow's home, but I think you're a little wild on the political part."

"Joe, you make me mad. I wish you would understand that I don't intend to marry, even if I should be fool enough to fall in love. Why, I'd go and take the veil; I'd commit suicide, but good heavens, I hope I sha'n't!"

"I hope that there is no immediate cause for alarm," Joe said, looking at her suspiciously.

"You're dead against the Englishmen, you know."

"Certainly."

"Well, there's only myself and pa left."

"There's no danger there, Joe. There would be war to the teeth if I married your father, with three in the same family fighting for the same honors," Helen said, laughing.

"Well, confound it, I don't intend to marry either."

"You are right, Joe. Don't think me flighty. I'm in dead earnest about my public work. I think it the greatest place one can aspire to, to serve the people and be honored by your constituents. I tell you,

Joe. it ought to mean more to men than it does. There never was such a need of statesmen. Our country is going to lose her proud prestige if brains and principle don't come to the front."

"That's the truth, Helen. We're just going to the devil. Are you— You're not mad, are you?"

"Oh, no, Joe, I'm not a fool. I've known it for some time. We are just reveling, marrying, and giving in marriage, as the Bible says."

"You think we're all coming back to this earth to live a thousand years. Now I'm in earnest and I hope you won't make fun of me nor tell anybody; but do you think we will be men and women, and talk and laugh and dance and ride pneumatic tires, just as we do now? Your doctrine is more reasonable than these orthodox mixtures."

"You are leading me into deep water, Joe. Of course I'm not just clear about that, but I know that I never could swallow this bosh about crowns and golden harps. I am sure, from the practicing I heard while at school, that I don't care to go where there are so many amateur musicians."

Joe laughed outright, and the remainder of the trip was spent in jest and laughter.

Agnes found her opportunity that afternoon, upon finding his lordship alone in the drawing-room. He looked guilty as she approached him with a strange look upon her face, for he knew himself open to reproach.

"Don't you think Miss Herman a very nice girl?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, indeed."

"I'm so glad you think so much of her."

"Yes, she is very nice and pretty." His lordship didn't want to commit himself, and he really felt conscience-stricken. What right had he to neglect Agnes and break her poor little heart? he had thought many a time, and yet he simply couldn't devote himself to her.

"Pretty isn't the word at all," Agnes said. "She's beautiful. Don't you think you are a little bit in love?"

Her companion sighed audibly and said, "My poor little girl, I hope I haven't caused you any trouble. Don't worry, Agnes, I'll be true to you. I admire her very much, but—"

"Oh, I thought, I hoped you loved her," Agnes said in despair.

"Agnes, have you lost your mind? 'Hoped I loved her,' and why?"

"Why, why,—well, never mind unless you do."

His lordship was in a dilemma and knew not what next to say. It didn't strike him that Agnes didn't want to marry him. It would have been almost impossible for him to understand that any woman could have such bad taste as to wish to be rid of him, Lord Avon of —shire, England, who had one of the finest country seats and the very handsomest mustache in the whole country!

"Did you think, Agnes, that I could so far forget myself as a gentleman of honor, as to—"

"I don't know anything about that, but I thought you cared for her, and I hoped so, because,—because—the truth is, my lord, I had a sweetheart before I knew you."

He was surprised at her confession, but felt so relieved that he didn't try to understand it. "Well, Agnes, I must be honest with you. I am smitten with Miss Herman and not lightly either. But I certainly intended to be honorable with you."

"Don't mention it, please. Here is your ring. I think a great deal of her and I like you and I hope she will accept you, but—my friend is very queer. There's Sir Alfred in the hammock looking lonesome and blue; hadn't we better join him?"

A merry party surrounded the tea table that night, and it was decided by a majority vote, which was afterward made unanimous, to go within a few days to Saratoga.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THAT night when Helen had gone to her room she picked up the Iliad and began to turn through it. "I can do it. I have the debates just exactly as they are; I can have the single encounter in the field. The scenery can represent the two armies, and the walls of Troy can be painted large enough. Yes, I'm sure I can, and I mustn't think of nonsense," she was saying, when a messenger brought her another challenge to a game of croquet. "You didn't give me a single game this morning," the note ran, "and I want a chance to redeem myself in the morning at half past six." Sir Alfred had made up his mind to propose and although he knew the hour to be a rather

strange one, it was the only time he felt sure of being alone with her. Helen decided not to meet him, so she went to bed with the determination to sleep until seven. The sun was just up when she awoke with a start, wondering what time it was. Drawing the curtain aside, she lay looking out over the beautiful lawn. But the minutes seemed tedious; she began to wonder if breakfast were not about ready, and finally arose and dressed. Upon looking at her watch she found it to be five minutes of six. "Well," she said, "it won't do for me to be awake and up and not go; if I had overslept—but I didn't, so I mustn't act a fool. I'll take a book and read awhile; the morning will inspire me."

She went down far past the croquet ground and sat down on a bench where she could see the house, and began to read. She was quite a distance from the house and confident that no one could hear her, and she read poem after poem aloud. She had just finished "Lochiel's Warning," which she had admired and practiced from childhood, when a voice said:

"How well you read, Miss Herman!"

"Good heavens, man!" she exclaimed, jumping up and dropping her book.

"I am sorry I startled you. Why, you are nervous," he said tenderly.

"Oh, nonsense, Sir Alfred! I'm not; you only surprised me. But how on earth did you manage to get near without my seeing you? I've kept my eyes on that path."

"So you were watching for me, were you?" Helen's eyes fell, but she answered bravely, "Of course I was

watching; do you suppose I came here to go to sleep again? And I'd just like to know how you got here."

"Suppose, Miss Herman, that I came down that path nearly an hour before you did."

"Of course, the simplest thing in the world. But you must have gotten up very early."

"I did. I didn't sleep very well."

"A guilty conscience?"

"Not unless it is true that minds at a distance can affect other minds. Maybe your conscience was troubling you for treating me so cruelly yesterday."

"I did treat you a little shabby," she said calmly, but with rising color. "I'll let you have a game this morning. But you said I was a good reader. I thank you; I consider it quite a compliment, and it encourages me to—to—"

"To what?"

"Why, it confirms me in my hope to become a great actress. Probably you don't know, though, that I intend going on the stage, probably this fall, if I can secure a position in some good company."

"Oh, pshaw! But you will get over that. Nearly every girl is stage-struck some time in life."

This angered Helen and she replied with spirit, "Well, I shall have ample time to find out if I am stage struck, as you term it. I am my own mistress."

"'Lord of thyself; that heritage of woe,
That fearful empire which the human breast
But holds to rob the heart within of rest!'"

he quoted. Helen said nothing to this, but stood biting the fingers of her gloves.

"You are rich; you do not need employment." Still she looked down her nose and continued to bite.

"You are not serious, surely, Miss Herman."

"Yes, I am serious."

"But you are so young—scarcely more than a child."

"I'm not young; I never was a child. Orphan girls have no time to fool away in childhood; they have too much responsibility resting upon their shoulders."

"I don't know how it is in America, but in England girls of twenty are not allowed out of their mother's sight; they are not considered women."

"That may be true. In this country some females of thirty are not women and never will be."

"Besides that, you are without relatives and friends."

"And I don't need any; I've gotten along so far without committing suicide or marrying."

"I suppose, then, the advice of a man of my age and experience is to be utterly ignored," he said moodily.

"You mean well, I know."

"Yes, Helen, I mean, I mean—"

"I know it, Sir Alfred, but if you are my friend you ought not to discourage me."

"But there are other things to be considered. I speak to you as a friend, as a brother. You might make an actress; indeed I think you would; you can adapt yourself to a great variety of parts. but one of your sex and age ought not to take such a risk."

"Why must young persons always be discouraged

in their efforts to rise? A man wants to make a lawyer out of a boy who is a natural mechanic, or a doctor out of one who ought to teach. There's a bit of poetry that expresses it:

“ ‘You can lead a horse to water,
But you cannot make him drink.
You can send a fool to college,
But you cannot make him think.
You can keep your daughter strumming
From morn till afternoon,
But you can't make her a player
If she hasn't any tune.
You cannot change the rooster's strut
Nor make the layers crow,
Though you may honestly believe
It would be better so.
You cannot make a farmer
Of the boy who loves the sea,
Though you may make him plow and plant
And whoa and haw and gee.
You cannot make a preacher
Of the stage-struck Romeo lad,
And if you ever do succeed
You'll wish you never had.’ ”

“I know it is a very common thing for persons to miss their calling, but why should you trouble yourself about a ‘life work,’ ‘a mission,’ with your wealth and the social position you can so admirably fill?”

“I do not see that that excuses me in leading an idle life.”

“But you might never rise to prominence. A wandering life makes one discontented with any other kind; and I tell you, Helen, that it will not bring you happiness, nor is it child's play; it's work.”

“Yes, I know. ‘No excellence without hard labor.’ My teacher wrote that on the blackboard when I was

but ten years old, and it has stayed by me ever since. I intend to work; I enjoy effort and making things move."

Several times Sir Alfred had been on the point of confessing his love, but he had begun to wonder if he really wanted such a self-willed woman. Wouldn't it be a second Corinne, in some respects, in England. Well, he would just wait and perhaps she would acquiesce, for he was almost sure that she had begun at least to care for him; and there was no hurry, as his lordship was affianced to Agnes, and Helen said 'Joe' in much too fraternal a fashion to rouse any jealous feelings in regard to him.

"The position you covet will always be out of your reach. Like John Burley's perch; he wouldn't have recognized it if he had caught it, but kept fishing and fishing."

"Well, are we not happier doing so?"

"I wasn't."

"How so?"

"Why, you know my father, Lord Gates, is just as good a man as there is in England to-day. He worked with increasing energy for himself and then for me. At your age, I too was an enthusiast, only longing for a chance to revolutionize the world! I worked with sublime endurance until I was twenty-eight years old. For some slight service to the government I was knighted, but I didn't see that I had made any change in the public's way of thinking or acting; corruption was just as plentiful and triumphant as it was before I was born. I saw worthy men sink, and low-browed villains rise, and it sickened

me completely, and I just stepped down and out."

"Oh, why didn't you keep on; I should have. I can't give up; there's no use talking. I must make the trial, and if my strength should not be equal to the task, I can at least know that I did my best. So many women are going into the world to-day, and besides, it is only a means to an end."

"All right, go ahead."

"Thank you, Sir Alfred, I'm so glad to hear that. It's so rare to be encouraged. I'm so tired of fogies who can say nothing but 'Be careful,' and talk of 'yawning chasms' everlastingly."

Sir Alfred looked at this spirited woman, who actually dared to make fun of him, and concluded that she was even more magnificent than he thought. He wondered if she had any weaknesses, and wished that a mouse would run across her foot. If she would only get frightened and cry, she would be perfectly lovely, he thought, but when Helen grasped a branch just above her, and stood revealing her form in its almost perfect outlines, every muscle performing its functions, every nerve under control and the blood coursing through her veins with true democratic freedom, his mood changed somewhat. "She would make a splendid Minerva; she's wisdom—and war personified. She would make a splendid tragedy queen, if she were angry instead of smiling, but oh, what sort of a wife would she be? There's no confiding sweetness about her. She's never sick, I'll warrant, nor dependent in any way," he mentally soliloquized, and then he asked her how much she weighed.

"One hundred and forty-five pounds, the last time I was weighed, and I think I have about got my growth."

"How tall are you?"

"Five feet and seven inches."

"I suppose you never faint and have the headache."

"No, not from ordinary causes, but once in a storm I was shocked by lightning and had headache before I recovered."

"Then you are afraid of storms."

"Well, yes; I'm not anxious to figure in one again."

"Are we going to play croquet?"

"No, we'd better go to breakfast, unless you wish to ask some more questions."

"Pardon me, Miss Herman; but you looked so charming and as I always admired small women I really wanted to know."

"To be sure. I wasn't offended. I always mean to be obliging, and I thought perhaps you would like to know if I use a curling iron or rouge."

"Miss Herman, you are offended and no wonder."

"I'm not; I'm wonderfully pleased that Sir Alfred Gates takes such an interest in me."

Was there ever such another aggravating woman! She wouldn't cry, nor get mad, nor pout; but would go after her own ball and excel him in aim and precision of stroke. It was quite useless to play croquet or any larger game with her, for she'd whitewash him every time. He longed to take her by the shoulder and shake her till her teeth chattered.

Joe and his father were seated in the library awaiting breakfast.

"I think it's all up between Agnes and his curli-ness, even now," Joe was saying.

"Oh, you do. Agnes will tell us, I suppose, and we must act surprised, you understand: and now we might try and save Helen."

"I think she is amply able to save herself."

"Well, I hope so. His lordship is all right, a jovial, good-natured fellow, and such men are scarce in the world. We've more mere men than frank, good-natured ones. One ought to cultivate a genial disposition. Why, the place is lively from the time he gets up until he goes to bed again. I tell you, after all, I like the fellow."

"He'll do very well for one of his kind, but there are other varieties I like better," Joe returned contemptuously.

The day passed pleasantly; everybody was in good spirits; even Sir Alfred seemed to be perfectly at ease, which, however, deep down in his heart he was not. It was late when they dispersed for the night, but Helen seized the Iliad and began planning as usual. Growing thirsty, she slipped quietly down to the lower hall for a glass of ice-water. Hearing a slight noise in the dining hall and thinking that perhaps burglars were rifling the silver closet, she stepped to the door and peeped in, just in time to see Joe pour out a glass of wine.

"Beware, Joe, 'the rapids are below you,'" she said, stepping to him and laying her hand on his arm.

"Don't get tragic, Helen," he said calmly, putting his glass down and turning toward her. "What are you doing here? You ought to be in bed."

"Why, I just came down for a glass of wine."

"You don't drink, Helen?"

"Yes, I do. I just sneak down here when everybody is in bed. Pour me a glass and give me one of those cigars. I might just as well have a smoke, too; no one will know."

"And you don't think it makes any difference just because no one knows?"

"Don't you feel the same way about it?"

"You are a woman."

"Women drink, don't they?"

"Some do, but I had a better opinion of you, Helen."

"And I had a better opinion of you, Joe."

"Confound it, Helen, what do you mean?"

"Tell me what you mean first."

"Why, I was sitting in my room thinking over the situation and it made me a little rash, I guess."

"What situation; is your father—"

"Oh, no; about the Englishmen; they drink and gamble, at least his importance does, while I haven't a single vice and am trying hard to amount to something, still—and yet, Miss Herman, Miss Herman, an American and a patriot, abhorring vice and titles, gives them all of her time and smiles. I just concluded that smart women admired dissipated men more than—"

"'Earnest boys.' The rebuke is just, Joe. I am glad you spoke out without reserve. I used to think

myself about perfect, but twice in the last year I've had my vanity stabbed and rightly, too. But I am going to do differently in the future, and you shall have no excuse to find fault with me hereafter. I hope that you won't drink that wine."

"No, I won't; but what did you come down for?"

"For some ice-water, and I heard the noise and thought I had better see what it was."

"And just in time, Helen, I thank you," and he opened the door for her to pass.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EVERYBODY rose early on Monday morning and nearly everybody had some business at town, as they were going away on Wednesday. Lord Avon had to see if a half dozen pairs of white pantaloons which he had ordered had come. The girls, of course, were due at the dressmaker's. Joe ostensibly had some business to attend to, but it was more to keep his eye on Helen than anything else, while Sir Alfred went just to fill in. Mrs. Daniels announced that she could not go until afternoon on account of some special work, she said. For she had discovered that a closet in Sir Alfred's room needed renovating, and she intended removing his belongings to another room and making war on the microbes. The day was sultry and the young people nearly melted coming home.

"It is just six weeks ago that we had the storm, Agnes," Helen said.

"Mercy, do you have storms around this part of the country?" his lordship asked.

"Why, yes; we have storms all over the country; no place is exempt," Agnes said.

"Dear me! Cyclones, railroad accidents and strikes—that is a fine record for a country no older than this. A man is never certain when he is on an American train whether he will ever get off alive or not; and he never knows when he goes to bed at night but that he'll be carried to the moon before morning by a cyclone. If it were not for the ladies this country would be intolerable. How long do you realize that there is a storm coming before it breaks?"

"Why, we generally begin to realize it when the roof commences ascending, and if we don't find it out then we probably never will," Joe volunteered, and then asked Helen if she were afraid of storms.

"I'm afraid of thunder and lightning," she replied.

"Why, Joe, who is it living in that old Thornton place?" Agnes asked.

"Nobody, I guess." But here they had reached home and gladly sought shelter from the awful heat. After dinner they sought the shade. His lordship drew his chair up beside Helen and began fanning her. Joe and Sir Alfred occupied themselves with the papers. Pretty soon Joe raised his eyes and said, "Agnes, that old Thornton place is taken. An old fortune-teller—Mother Bonnelly, I guess it's pronounced." Here Mrs. Daniels surprised everybody by dropping her sewing and turning pale. "What's the matter?" they all asked.

"I would advise all of you to keep away from her. She can see a grave ten years in the future," and with this she arose and went quickly into the house. Everybody looked at everybody else, but nobody offered any information. His lordship, who was constitutionally opposed to gloom, said, "Now let's not get the blues; maybe she can see orange blossoms as well as graves, and every lady wants to know—"

"The color of her lord's hair," Joe said.

"How good of you to say for me what I couldn't express from modesty and deference to the ladies! Of course they think senators as good as lords, that is, most women do, but still there are those who prefer a nobleman in England to a congressman at home."

"That's true, but as for me, I prefer to patronize home industries," Helen remarked, coming to Joe's rescue. Here Sir Alfred lowered his paper and addressed himself to the crowd.

"You Americans make a great fuss about aristocratic forms of government. The only difference is that in this country, just as soon as a man loses office you kick him and walk over him, while you bow down to his successor until it becomes his turn to be cast down; but in England a man can't be put down unless he actually deserves it; he's something but mere popularity to assure his position. Oh, you've an aristocracy if it is kaleidoscopic; it's lord there and senator here."

"'A rose by another name,' is all, Sir Alfred," his lordship said.

"'A burr by any other name would stick as fast'

is a better version for that, isn't it?" Helen asked archly. "What you say is partially true, but I think that patriotic women ought to prefer their countrymen even if they are not quite perfect, having followed the example of older and more corrupt nations."

Joe was delighted. Helen was a trump after all.

"Oh, it shouldn't make any difference to the women; they ought to consult their own best interests," said Sir Alfred.

"Lives there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said
This is my own, my native land?"

Helen said with a flourish. "But maybe you don't credit woman with having a soul?"

"Well, if she hadn't I suppose she could make man believe she had," Sir Alfred said wearily. Helen's eyes twinkled, and Joe looked so appreciative that she went over and sat by his side. Agnes had not told her that the engagement was off, but the absence of the ring indicated it, so she felt herself free to be as partial to Joe as she liked.

"Do keep your chair, Miss Herman, do, and I'll just move the tree," his lordship said.

"I know you would; but wouldn't you just as soon trade heads?" and they all laughed.

"But what about the fortune-teller?" Agnes asked to relieve the embarrassment.

"Why, Miss Easton, it's a splendid chance to get our future diagnosed!" Sir Alfred said scornfully.

"It's so hot, it's going to rain this evening and I must go and meet Pa as soon as the train's in," Joe said, rising. A few moments later Agnes excused herself.

"I tell you corn will go sky-high by fall, unless we have rain," our congressman was saying as he rode along home with Joe. "The ground is as dry as brick and the crops are burning up in many districts. Oh, I'm going to hold on a while yet. I'm glad I'm rid of that fellow."

"And are we for sure?"

"Yes, Aggie wrote me yesterday about it, got the letter yesterday just before I started. That's a girl's way; they think they can write what they can't say; and I suppose she thought I wouldn't like it. I tell you I never want to chance another Englishman; the Board of Trade is as risky business as I want to try. I've made a few sly inquiries about him and, why, Joe, it would take twice our pile to pay his debts. I never would have consented in the first place if he hadn't—oh, hell! he scared me about Snib and took me in with his d—d slick way. What's that? Somebody in the Thornton house?"

"Yes, I saw by the paper that an old woman who calls herself Mother Bonnelly—"

"What! that old hag alive yet?"

"Why, what do you know about her?"

"Oh, nothing much. Of course I don't believe in such things, but she, if it is she, and the name is the same, told your Aunt Kate's fortune just before she was married. She told her that her husband would live but a couple of years, and you know he died just two years and one day after they were married."

"I knew that uncle had died before they were married very long, but I didn't know it had been

foretold. She was very much affected when Agnes read the advertisement. Agnes had been wondering who had taken the old place," Joe said, as they drove up to the gate.

Agnes was missed at supper time and Mrs. Daniels, going in search of her, met her just as she was entering the hall with face flushed as if from rapid walking. "Where have you been? You had better cool off a little before eating."

"Oh, no, auntie, I'm not very warm; have just been down to the old orchard," Agnes replied with affected carelessness. She sat down to the table and began to talk much more gayly than was usual with her.

After supper they tried to play whist, but the interest flagged on account of the heat; so after a brief stay on the lawn they separated for the night. As they entered the hall Helen tripped, and in trying to keep from falling, her head was brought dangerously near Sir Alfred's broad chest. It was nothing at all, but it sent the blood to her face; and he, noting it, tried to catch her eye, but she avoided it and abruptly sought her room. She walked the floor and called herself a fool and finally threw herself on the bed, unmindful of the fact that she had not disrobed, and finally fell into a deep sleep.

Sir Alfred sat in his room seeking solace in his cigar. He felt sleep to be out of the question. If he could only make her betray the least femininity; if she would only show the least dependence on him, or if he could anger her even, he was thinking. But no, she would walk majestically beside him, with

just the tips of her fingers resting upon his sleeve, and return his taunts with such a sweetly sarcastic smile! So he smoked cigar after cigar and moved from window to window seeking composure and a cool spot, for the heat was almost insufferable. Vivid flashes of lightning revealed a dark and ominous cloud in the northwest. A light breeze sprang up and Sir Alfred leaned out of the window, grateful for its refreshing effect. Suddenly there was a roaring noise accompanied by a horrible flash of lightning and deafening thunder. Then he heard doors opening and voices crying "A storm!" "To the cave!" "Hurry, hurry!" He rushed to Helen's door, where he was shortly reinforced by Joe with Agnes in cap and gown, clinging to him. Helen was first dazed and then paralyzed with fright. Sir Alfred, unafraid, as most people are until distinguished by living through one cyclone, gathered her in his arms and staggered toward the cave. It was only a few rods from the side door, but on that short trip he saw one large tree, not twenty feet from the house, literally dragged out by the roots, and another large trunk nearer still snapped like a pipe stem. It seemed an eternity before he should reach the door with his precious, helpless burden!

The group inside, like most hasty gatherings of the terror-stricken, presented a most comical picture. The servants from stable boy to cook were present in various stages of dress—or undress. The host, with one shoe on and the other in his pocket, stood at the door listening. Joe had smashed his thumb in the fracas, and Agnes was kneeling by him blowing it.

His lordship had succeeded in getting his clothes on, and had paused long enough before the mirror to curl his mustache by a flash of lightning; but finding that he had forgotten his collar he sought obscurity behind an apple barrel. Mrs. Daniels, who considered being blown away no greater danger than the consumption from a sudden cold, had donned a warm wrapper and a pair of overshoes and a shawl about her head, while on one arm she carried numerous cloaks and shawls with which she quickly wrapped the distressed girls. Sir Alfred and Helen were clothed, but the latter seemed to be scarcely in her right mind, for she stood half turned to the wall sobbing and trembling. Suddenly the door flew open and the candle was extinguished, while the box upon which it sat was blown over. A din of ejaculations from the men and shrieks from the women arose. As Helen sobbed with fresh terror, Sir Alfred, who was standing near her, slid his arm around her waist and drew her to him, whispering the tenderest comfort. As Joe relighted the candle Sir Alfred discreetly withdrew his embrace, but as they were in an obscure corner he retained her hand; and such a look as she gave him!

“ ’Twas only a look, but it went to the heart;

’Twas only a glance, but ’twas Cupid’s own dart.”

In a short time the storm was spent. The host cried, “She’s over; come on. I hope the house is left.” Helen’s strength returned and she simply took the arm of her hero instead of occupying both as she had in their descent. The house was still standing, but the wind was shattered, and trees,

boards and various other obstructions were scattered broadcast.

Helen cast one hasty glance about her and hurried to her room and locked the door. She went and stood before her mirror and in a half peevish, half tragic voice said, "I'm lost, I'm lost! Oh, miserable fool; utter failure that I am!" Then glancing at her Iliad she cried, "That can do me no good now; my stage powers I might as well never have had. Oh, I'm lost, beyond redemption. And is he my ideal of manhood, because he has a fine head and broad shoulders? Idle, ambitionless. Oh, God, I might pray for help, but I've no faith in myself. I might as well have been born to wash dishes—yes, much better. Why did the Lord waste gifts on a thankless creature who will fling them to the winds, settle down in English society, be presented at court, be permitted to kiss her majesty's hand; talk and sup tea, if not wine? Oh ye gods, heap curses on my head if I *ever, ever* leave my native land!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HIS LORDSHIP was in his room pacing the floor. He wouldn't stay another day in this God-forsaken country. To drag a man out of bed and into the presence of ladies without giving him a chance to make his toilet was a little too much! He would speak to Helen this morning; she must consent to a speedy marriage and then away to dear old London with a bride and three million dollars. He would

buy a yacht and have the family diamonds reset. He wished there was time for a trousseau; and he stopped in his reverie to congratulate himself upon his escape from the marriage intended at his coming.

The next morning Sir Alfred asked Helen to accompany him to town, and his lordship suggested that he and Agnes be allowed to accompany them. He felt very little uneasiness about his friend's attitude toward Helen, knowing him to be so adverse to marriage, and thinking Helen so far from his ideal, yet he thought it nothing less than prudent to watch them. Since sunrise his lordship had been in much better spirits; they would be off for Saratoga next day, and perhaps cyclones didn't visit that Eden; so he concluded to give Helen time to send to Paris for her outfit.

After dinner his lordship secured Helen's company for a game of croquet and in the evening she and Joe played chess. Poor Sir Alfred was baffled. He had scarcely slept the night before, anxious for the day, that he might boldly claim his own. Again in the solitude of his room he planned how to meet her without interruption, and decided upon the six o'clock croquet dodge. They had not played croquet since their quarrelsome game of the week before, and he had concluded to never again challenge her to do what he did so poorly; but that seemed his only chance to get ahead of his friend—for it was a physical impossibility for his lordship to rise that early without Adams to assist him. So Helen received the following:

"DEAR HELEN:—Please meet me in the morning at the croquet ground at the usual time. Your devoted
"ALFRED."

Helen twisted the note, tore it in pieces and then stamped on the pieces; called herself a hopeless idiot and so forth. Yet she knew she would meet him. Oh, how she did wish for some settlement of all these conflicting questions! If she only knew—Her thought was interrupted by her taking note of a bright light out beyond the meadow. Wrapping a shawl about her shoulders, she slipped out of the house; she would consult the fortune-teller.

It was just at this time that Sir Alfred, dreaming sweet dreams, was sitting at his window gazing out into the night. He was resting his head on his hand, thinking with fast beating heart of the rapture awaiting him, when he was startled by a stifled scream. He leaned out and listened.

"What are you doing out alone, Helen, at midnight; have you started to see the old witch?"

"Heavens, Joe, how you frightened me! But do you judge me by yourself?"

"Certainly not; I heard a commotion among the stock and hurried out."

"In your hurry you didn't forget your cuffs, Joe." The face at the window smiled; he thought what a good joke he would have on Helen—darling Helen, who couldn't wait a few hours, but must consult a fortune-teller.

"Nor your collar, nor your tie," she went on.

"Come, Helen, you've got me; but I was anxious to know if the old hag could tell anything. Well,

let's go together. Lucky for you that you did run across me, for there's tramps everywhere."

"But I haven't my watch nor any valuables with me."

"Well, they'd just carry you off until I redeemed you." The face above grew sober.

"Come along, we won't get back until near morning."

"No, Joe, I don't believe I will go." There was no use of her going if with a third party.

"Just as you choose," Joe returned, a little wrathful.

"You think the Englishman will care? Oh, you needn't protest; Agnes told me all about it, how you were coming home to angle for him. Girls are as designing as the very devil; and he, the great chump, perfectly ignorant." The face at the window grew pale as death and drew back. And the two kept on talking without knowledge of having been heard, for they had not learned of the microbes that had necessitated the change of Sir Alfred's room.

"Well, Joe, I don't intend to marry him, anyway." And then she whispered, "Agnes is free now and the farce is over. What's that?" she exclaimed, stepping nearer Joe as she saw a man jump behind a bush. "Joe, it looked like your father."

"It can't be, though," he replied in embarrassment.

"But it was. Oh, goodness; he's been to Mother Bonnelly's."

"But he don't believe in such things."

"Neither do we. But we'd better be getting in."

The next morning Helen rose up early and dressed

herself in a neat new traveling dress. Taking her book, but forgetting her gloves, she went to the rustic seat at the croquet ground. She turned the leaves of the book but did not read, being too busy swallowing her heart and watching the path. Six o'clock came and no Sir Alfred, but she consoled herself with the thought that he was not due until half past, although she had expected him earlier. The weary minutes dragged themselves along. She took out her watch and sat looking at it ticking off the time. At half past six she rose and leaned against a tree. At seven she was quivering with rage, and her eyes flashed lightning, but she gained control of herself and stood with her back to the house for another half hour. Then she started up the path and presently she met the truant. She didn't wait for him, but relaxing her face a little kept right on until they met.

"I beg a thousand pardons, Miss Herman, but I did oversleep."

"I can easily forgive you, Sir Alfred, as I have just been enjoying the most refreshing sleep down under the elm. I awoke at five, but I was so sleepy that I knew if I fell asleep again I wouldn't be in time, so I rose and came out here and have been napping ever since. Breakfast must be nearly ready; you know we were to breakfast a half hour earlier this morning."

"Yes, I believe so," he said. "She don't care a damn," he thought.

"I'm so glad we are going; it's so dull here, although every one has been nice to me. Yet the coun-

try must be dull when one is contemplating a season in Saratoga, with balls and rides and races and the roulette wheel or board—which is it?”

He looked at her searchingly and said “wheel.”

“Yes, of course, how stupid of me! And the women play, I’ve heard, and his lordship has promised to teach me.” Then turning to him with surprising frankness, she said, “Please don’t tell anybody. I don’t really believe in women gambling and I don’t intend making a regular business of it, but it won’t matter for just one summer; besides, nobody knows me. But I wouldn’t have Joe Easton know it for the world. Hello, here he is,” and a moment later they met him coming to ask if she would like to go to the depot on her bicycle or if she preferred the carriage.

“How are you going?” she asked.

“Why, if you want to go on your wheel I will go on mine, but if you wish to ride we’ll take both the carriage and the phaeton.”

“Let’s you and I go on the bicycles.”

“All right. I’ll go and get them in shape.”

“Let me go along. You will excuse me, Sir Alfred; business before pleasure, you know.”

Sir Alfred was completely disgusted with Helen and provoked at himself. “She’s as heartless as all of the rest; but I won’t rush back to England like a love-sick boy; I’ll just stay and wear it out.” Why couldn’t he see that her heart was wounded, that her brain was on fire and that all her frivolous, reckless talk was to conceal the deepest humiliation?

At breakfast the host was as jolly as a summer

girl. Turning to Helen he said, "Why, you look as mischievous and charming as a witch." Helen laughed, but none but Joe understood its real meaning. "If Joe were only ten years younger I'd thrash him, lock him up and play dandy myself."

"You are not old. I like gray hairs and bald heads and blue coats like yours. Now blue coats make me feel patriotic. Were you in the war?"

"Yes, for four years; I've helped plant the stars and stripes many a time and may have to fight for them again if labor trouble keeps brewing."

"It isn't the flag or the government that these blows are aimed at, but the corrupt practices of corrupt men and the cowards in high places. The trouble to-day is that we have partisans instead of statesmen, and representatives who too frequently recognize no constituency but their own private interests. The truth is that there are too many fellows in congress to-day and too few honorable men."

"Public men, as a rule, are just as honorable as they dare be, and if a man is loyal to his party principles, he is just as good a man as we can expect to find in this day and age of the world."

"But is the party true to the best interests of the country? is the question. If it is false, then he is a traitor. Why can't men be true and honorable?" Sir Alfred glanced at her. She must be a regular Rebecca Sharp, he thought. Well, one thing sure, she could deceive him no longer. A woman who would be an actress, a public speaker, a politician and everything that his wife *should not be!* She could go on with her farce; he was now behind the

scenes, knew the art of her "making up," so she could cast no glamour over him as he sat in the audience and looked on from the proper side! He wondered how any one could be so deliberately wicked, and again cursed the higher education of women.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE next morning our party awoke in Saratoga. Beautiful, gay, wanton, Saratoga, where wine flows so freely that we wonder, why the Lord wasted so much pure, life-giving water there!

And a fine picture she presented that day, calculated to intoxicate the most puritanical if they once gave way to an appreciation of sensuous beauty. The day was perfect, and every one seemed to be making the most of it. Magnificent turnouts thronged the boulevards, each glittering spoke a mirror reflecting the sunlight. Ladies in silks and jewels, much be-plumed, and, it must be confessed, much be-rouged, with happy, careless looks on their faces, leaned back luxuriously as they whirled along. Our party caught the contagion and soon were as gay as the gayest, Helen especially outdoing herself at repartee and sparkling frivolity. She seemed to have completely forgotten, to have never known anything about the crying needs of the country, "hunger and homelessness," "despair and crime."

That evening there was a ball at the hotel where our party were stopping. Agnes and Helen, in creamy,

white, lace-trimmed silks, were escorted by Mrs. Daniels and Joe. If the day had been enchanting it had been as but a sunlit beach to the waves shimmering in the moonlight, compared with this scene. Tropical plants, mirrors, pictures, statuary, and music that would have submerged the scruples of Tolstoi himself, were but a setting for the brilliant gathering of the beautiful, richly dressed women and gallant men. Everybody danced; father and son, matron and maid, young and old—but pardon—nobody at Saratoga is ever old!

After the dancing, couples and small parties broke away and seated themselves at small tables, where men and women

“ Whose rising flush

Might once have been mistaken for a blush,”

drank wine without compunction.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

As time passed at the gay watering place, Sir Alfred adhered pretty well to his resolution to simply have a good time and not reveal his feelings to Helen. Certainly there were enough feminine hearts sighing for him to amuse him and satisfy his vanity, but he held himself aloof from anything more than casual acquaintanceship and pined in secret. He wasn't sorry that he had found Helen out, but regretted that the knowledge had not come early enough to save his peace of mind. For over and over again

had he recounted his summer experiences; of how he had begun to love her; and how he had thought of her, with all her important, independent ways, a woman who, once awakened, would be capable of strong, deep, lasting affection. He could have stood her notions, even her stage and political aspirations—until after he had married her—but the thought that she had schemed to marry him before she had seen him!

Cupid is a powerful little god, but he is certainly not a wise one, else he would manage his affairs better. Oh, if Sir Alfred could have known how many times poor Helen cried herself to sleep, and seen her in the morning as she bathed her swollen eyes and coaxed her complexion not to tell tales. But he never even imagined anything of the sort. He thought her all but incapable of emotion; the one exception to her usual demeanor—engraven on fond memory—being his only proof of her womanliness.

He had watched, actually watched, to see if she ever entered any of the gambling establishments frequented by women. He had never seen her drink nor bet on the races, and this knowledge was a ray of happiness to his otherwise desolate heart.

Once, when walking past a florist's, he sauntered in, and taking a fancy to some roses, ordered a bouquet. He had no distinct idea what he would do with it. Perhaps Agnes could use it!

An hour later, Helen, in her room, arrayed in pink satin and lace, was bending over the same bouquet. A tear dropped among its petals; but she drew herself up saying: "I won't wear his flowers. I'll have my revenge; I'll bring him to my feet and then spurn him from me."

When she and Joe and Mrs. Daniels passed into the ball-room they happened to locate near Sir Alfred. He asked her to promenade with him. "Let me see your program," he said.

"Here it is. It is about full, though."

"Not quite; here is a quadrille, a waltz and a polka."

"Why, you've taken the waltz and the polka and you don't dance round dances at all."

"Well, you'll be tired when you reach those numbers and we will rest and talk. I don't really see how women can dance all evening. It's a wonder they have any health."

"Fiddlesticks! The woman who dances and moves about most has the best health. It's the one who lounges about and sleeps until near noon who feels lifeless. But I have an apology to offer for not wearing your roses; they did not match my dress, and then you men seem to think that we can carry any amount of bric-a-brac about with us. Our trains are quite enough, I should think."

"No apology is necessary, Miss Herman; I didn't really expect you to carry it. In fact I bought it for Miss Easton, but found that Mr. Algernon Du Boise had gotten ahead of me. I'm sorry that I bothered you with them."

"No, I'm glad I have them; they will go nicely with a basket of fruit I am going to take to some orphan children in the morning."

"I didn't know that gay, careless women like yourself, and one who receives as much attention as you do, ever wasted a thought on any poor unfortunates."

"Oh, I can afford to give flowers that I do not have to pay for; and besides, if there is anything in the world that claims my sympathy, it is an orphan child."

"How old were you when you lost your parents?"

"They were both killed in a railroad accident when I was but little more than a year old."

"And had you no female relative to take care of you?"

"No, I had a very faithful nurse, but she died when I was fourteen. But a creature like me did not need nurturing, and having lived so long as I have without affection I am insured against ever needing it." And she laughed. Sir Alfred looked at her, half suspecting her mirth was forced, and bending nearer he whispered something that was quite tender, to which she quickly replied:

"Oh, pshaw! Women don't think of such things as they once did. The girl is happiest who has the greatest number of young men at her beck and call; she don't have deep, solemn questions puzzling her, making her wrinkled and old; she doesn't want a husband to prove faithless, and children to break her heart. Why, a married woman's joys are her torture; her husband, if he respects her, is a tyrant, expecting of her what she is disappointed in if she expects the same of him. You know it's nice to make and execute your own laws. Oh, all of these little unpleasant things could be avoided if girls were a little less earnest in their love and a little more serious in their flirtations. You understand I carry a flirtation just far enough to make it interesting, but never get

real serious—so much involved that some other good-looking man will not do as well. Now there is your friend; he's splendid company, and Joe Easton, the manliest boy that ever drew breath. But here is his lordship now," and they watched him approach, happy and smiling, past battery after battery of bright, expectant eyes. Many were the fair girls whose hearts fell as he passed them by, and many were the fathers, who, though unused to prayer, silently thanked heaven for its watchful care!

"This dance is mine," his lordship said upon reaching Helen's side.

"Yes, I know." Sir Alfred retreated a few steps and stood watching.

"Let me bring you a glass of wine before the dance begins. I noticed you tired considerably before the last was done. Your cheeks are not as rosy as they were in the country. The air and water of Saratoga do not seem to agree with you; you will have to try the English climate." This was said in a low tone, but Sir Alfred heard and was even guilty of listening.

"I believe I will try a glass of wine if you will be kind enough to bring it."

Just as she was raising the glass to her lips she encountered the stern, contemptuous gaze of Joe Easton, who had come to deliver a commission from Agnes. Her hand shook and the wine spilled over silk and laces. "Here, Your Lordship, take it, please; I don't believe I want it. I'm not feeling well and if you will excuse me, and Mr. Easton will escort me (Joe quickly offered his arm), I will go to Mrs. Daniels."

Sir Alfred turned on his heel and left, perfectly bewildered, saddened beyond anything his pessimistic life had ever known.

His lordship stood holding the glass, indignant, and at a loss what to do. Just then he felt a rousing slap on his back and heard a familiar voice in his ear. "Hello, old boy; how's your good health? What makes you look so fresh and cheerful and what are you doing with that champagne? better let me drink it," and the young man took the glass and drained it.

"How are you, Mr. Snib? I didn't know you were in Saratoga," his lordship returned, glancing around to see if any one had noticed the vulgar caress on his aristocratic back.

"Well, I'm right here; and I consider myself strictly in it. Why, you're like a full-blown rose, especially your nose. You're taking too much whiskey; you'd better dilute it and lessen the dose, or, better still, take the treatment. We have anti-drunk institutions all over the country, and some of the largest have from three to five hundred jags all the time. The process is almost painless except for a devilish sore arm. If you want to try it, why, I won't tell on you; on the dead I won't!"

"I assure you, Mr. Snib, that I don't need the treatment," his lordship returned in a low voice. "I drink a little, but never get drunk. Englishmen never get drunk."

"I understand, no man ever did need the treatment, just as women never lace or allow themselves to be kissed by any other man but their husband!"

His lordship's temper arose as he expostulated in vain.

"Well then, it beats me what makes your face so red."

"Really, Mr. Snib, is my face red?"

"As a boiled lobster."

"Oh, heavens, what shall I do?"

"Go to your room and soak your head in ice water, and then take a cold bath and you'll be all right."

"But I'm engaged for every dance for the next three hours."

"Just let me take your place. I'll make the best excuse in the world. I wanted to dance with that beautiful Miss Herman, but her card was full when I found her."

"Miss Herman was feeling indisposed and has gone to her room," his lordship said, eyeing the swaggering Adolphus suspiciously.

"The devil she has! Well, I'll take Miss Easton, but I won't dance with that pigeon-toed Miss Young,—Miss Old it ought to be read,—not if she owned the moon and fenced at that! I guess you'd better stay until that's off; you can probably keep on your legs that long," and young Snib walked away, leaving his lordship with the empty glass in his hand, inwardly cursing American vulgarity.

Joe and Helen took the elevator and were quickly on the third floor. "Come and sit by this window," Joe said, leading her to a lovely alcove.

"Joe, I know you are going to scold."

"Well, Helen, the fact is, I'm a little surprised."

"So am I, Joe."

"I never saw you act like that before. You know you were just joking with me at home."

"I never was so reckless before."

"There are lots of temptations here; it's like living in hell and not getting scorched. Sometimes I have been scarcely able to resist the temptation to take a social glass."

"Don't you ever do it, Joe," Helen said quickly.

"I hope I never shall. This constant swilling disgusts me; and then total abstinence here distinguishes one from the common herd."

"That is something, Joe, to be distinguished by being real decent. Oh, I would give anything if I had not made that public exhibition of myself. I wear the white ribbon, too. I'll leave it off hereafter, but I'll never offer to drink again."

"I hope you'll stick to it, Helen. You don't know how I felt when I saw you with that glass at your lips, nor what men think of women who drink and gamble. I think a great deal of you, Helen; you have talked to me as no other woman ever did, not even Agnes; you have given me higher ideas and I want you—I want you—to be my friend."

"And you are already my friend, my brother, rather," she said, with swimming eyes. Here some one passed them, but they failed to notice it, and a moment later Helen went to her room, after having secured Joe's promise to go with her next morning on her errand of mercy, for she really intended going.

Once in her room a flood of tears came to her relief, and as she knelt by her bed and prayed with an

aching heart, these words in a light, fresh voice floated in at the open window:

“Many a heart is aching,
After the ball.”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE next morning Joe and Helen made their call before breakfast, and upon their return, our party, with the exception of his lordship, breakfasted at nine. Then they rode to Columbian Spring, the one Mrs. Daniels patronized, or rather the one she was patronizing then, for she changed several times during her stay. After that, Joe and the two girls went to Congress Park, which presented the same gay scene it had the day before, and would again to-morrow.

As they strolled along, whom should they meet but George Sanderson? Joe grasped his hand, introduced Helen, and then said: “This is Agnes; you remember her and I’m sure she remembers you.” Agnes grew deathly pale and Joe, to settle the embarrassment, said, “I’ve got two on my hands, George, and I’m glad of your timely appearance,” and taking Helen’s arm he led on.

“There, Joe, they are playing ‘The Star Spangled Banner.’ I never hear patriotic music that I don’t feel emotion and enthusiasm, and I have often wondered if it was universal with people. I wonder if the people of other countries feel the same when they hear their national airs.”

"Of course they do. I tell you there's something in patriotism; it is a feeling distinct from all others. We feel love, sorrow, hate, disgust, reverence and we feel patriotism, and the man who isn't moved by it is a dead soul, and though he were worth millions we could lose him without a sigh. Why, I would stick to my country if heaven forsook her."

"So would I. But because there is no fighting to be done we mustn't conclude there is nothing to do. If America is rid of foreign oppression she is by no means free from herself. And you surely see in all these clashing of interests, if not actual war, the imminent danger to our welfare as a united nation. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand,' and a country is a household in a large sense."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AND this was the woman Sir Alfred was trying in vain to shut out of his heart, out of his thought. No wonder he had learned to love her, for no acting, no assumed carelessness can entirely hide the effulgent light of a noble nature; nor can crude expressions of half-fledged, erratic ideas condemn one naturally gifted. And while he fancied that he tried to avoid her he found himself ever near her. As for her—

"There is an unseen battle-field
In every human breast,
Where two contending forces meet,
But where they seldom rest."

Her love for Sir Alfred and her personal ambitions were waging what she knew must prove a decisive battle, for if she chose to go on with her professional career, her love must be crucified, and if she married Sir Alfred, it would mean an eternal farewell to those dreams, those hopes she had cherished from early childhood. Then his treatment of her pained her almost beyond endurance; she could not understand it, but wondered if it were not the promptings of a conservative nature—an attempt to check what he thought might be obnoxious to her, and quite useless to entertain.

Upon returning to the hotel, Agnes went directly to her aunt's room.

“Are you dressed for dinner, dear?”

“Yes, Auntie, I'm not going to dress again until evening. I want to talk to you.”

“Oh, have you decided about your dress?”

“No, it's not about that at all. I'm not going to marry Lord Avon.”

“Not going to marry him!”

“No, the engagement was broken off before we left the country.”

“Why, Agnes! You told me nothing about it!”

“Well, I'm going to tell you all about it now. You don't think me deceitful and scheming, do you, Auntie?”

“No, no, but I'm sorry you didn't confide in me. Older people ought to be consulted in such matters.”

“Well, you remember George Sanderson,” and then, as was her wont when she had anything lengthy and hard to relate, she began boldly, and rapidly

related the main points, telling of her indifference to Lord Avon, of Joe's meeting George, and the old feelings that news of him awakened in her; Helen's plan to save her and how she had released his lordship. Then she rather bluntly said: "And George is here and I have promised to marry him."

"Oh, Agnes, you hasty child, why didn't you wait until you had seen me?"

"Why, you always liked George, and now he is such a good man and such a gentleman!"

"What does he do?"

"He is a temperance lecturer."

"But you are both so young, and he is poor. You won't have five dollars where you've had a hundred."

"Oh, we'll get along. I'm not thinking about money matters."

"No, I suppose not; young people seldom do when they are in love and want to marry. What do you suppose you would know about taking care of a sick baby?"

"Oh, dear, I'm not thinking of babies, either," Agnes returned, with a very red face.

"But no woman ought to enter the married state ignorant of its responsibilities."

"But how much more would I have known if I had married the—the—other one."

"Well, I didn't exactly approve of that, either, but you know I wasn't consulted then. What will your father say?"

"I will write to him this evening. There's Joe's voice; he's coming to take us to dinner. Now, aunt, don't look cross; George will be so glad to see you; oh, he's with Joe!"

A moment later Mrs. Daniels was shaking hands with George; she also kissed his cheek, and as she did so, Sir Alfred stepped out of the elevator and witnessed the affecting little scene. "Are the ladies ready to go down to dinner?" he asked, approaching them. Then after the introduction Joe assigned Mrs. Daniels to Sir Alfred, Agnes to George and started himself to find Helen, only to find himself forestalled by his lordship.

Sir Alfred was so befuddled that he began to doubt his own wits. There sat Agnes with the stranger, both smiling and happy as if newly wedded. He glanced at her hand and saw in place of the diamond a modest pearl. His lordship was perfectly oblivious to everything except his conversation with Helen. What could it mean? and as soon as the ladies were disposed of he laid his hand on his friend's arm and requested a private interview at once.

"What the devil is the meaning of this, old friend?" Sir Alfred asked, as soon as they were alone.

"The meaning of what?"

"Why, I thought I came to this country to act as best man for you."

"And I hope you will not be disappointed; however, the bride will not be the one we first supposed."

"Then I am to understand that the engagement between you and Miss Easton is off." Sir Alfred looked at his friend in supreme contempt.

"The lady saw fit to dismiss me. I admit that it broke me up a little at the time, but the charming Miss Herman would replace an angel."

"So you are affianced to Miss Herman, are you?"

"I regret to say, my dear friend, that I am not at the present time, but I hope to be soon."

"You are an avowed suitor, then?"

"Yes, and that impertinent Joe Easton knows it, but he is dishonorable enough to try to supplant me," and with this well-aimed thrust he left the room.

Sir Alfred stared absent-mindedly out of the window at the throng on the lawn. Although he had resigned the idea of marrying Helen, he recoiled at the thought of any one else having her, and now he must stand back for his lordship, and then for Joe Easton. Well, it would do no harm to see her now, he thought, and he resolved to be with her as much as possible. Noticing his party upon the lawn, he went down and secured a position near them.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A BOY came along scattering handbills. "Oh, a play!" Helen exclaimed. "I'm going."

"I don't believe auntie will let us; she doesn't approve of theaters," Agnes said.

"She won't need to go. You will take me, won't you, Joe?"

"Gladly."

"Oh, Miss Herman, you never ask a favor of me, your devoted slave," his lordship whispered.

"But I will ask you to dance with me to-night; you waltz divinely."

"I'll dance the limit with you and that is three

waltzes and two polkas. Be sure to keep them for me. Let's drive out to the lake and have a boat-ride."

"Oh, please don't ask me to move. I'm too indolent and this air is too enervating."

"Well, I must move, I have an engagement," his lordship returned, a little piqued.

"And you would have neglected that for me? How kind of you! Well, I will go to-morrow if you wish."

"I'll remember," he said, as he turned to go.

"Joe, you promised to take Aunt Kate and me out to Mount McGregor this afternoon."

"By George, I did! Glad you reminded me of it, Agnes. Would you like to go, Helen?"

"I'd love to go, Joe, but I'm too lazy," she said, smiling.

When they had been gone a short time Helen said to Agnes, "You are my oracle; would there be anything improper in my going out for an hour or two?"

"I shouldn't think you would want to. The streets are crowded and you might meet with an accident. Can't you wait until to-morrow?"

"I want to go to-day, and—well, I'm going, that's all."

Sir Alfred came forward and offered his company. Helen blushing accepted.

"Where do you wish to go?" he asked, as they were stepping into the carriage.

"I'll give the orders," she replied. He wondered what on earth she was up to now.

"Let's drive around awhile," he ventured.

"Well, after I get through with my errand. You

know I'm going to seek a theatrical engagement and begin my stage life."

"What! Not that I'm surprised at anything, but I didn't know you meant to begin so soon. I thought it was something in the future."

"I've idled too long now. I am disgusted to think how I have wasted this summer, when there's so much to be done."

Then he again offered her his stock arguments against such a step, only to be met with the scathing remark that self-satisfied, ambitionless people were a dead weight to the world, and the worst class of sinners, in her estimation.

"But if you must do reform work, why don't you choose a more likely line than the theater?"

"They say the way to every man's heart is through his stomach, and the way to the people's minds is through their amusements. Why, they used to teach religion through the means of 'miracle' plays. I tell you there's no field but the novelist's, that compares with the stage as a teacher and a reformer. And there is no other class of people so unjustly abused as actors and actresses."

"That is simply because you don't know anything about them. I'm not surprised when a fifteen-year old country girl runs off with a troupe; but I must confess that I am perfectly dumfounded when a woman of your age and natural intelligence deliberately enters such work. And do you think you will be received into any company of worth without preparation?"

"Why, my good man, I've been studying for six years."

"Have you had any lessons?"

"Yes, for three years. I've been taking three lessons a week this last year, from an artist too."

"What will Lord Avon say?"

"He will scold and pet me and exhaust his eloquence trying to dissuade me, but it won't do him any good."

"Well, I think you are a sample of the times, Miss Herman. Shall I go in with you?"

"Oh, no, indeed; just wait here or go into the office."

"Is the manager of the Metropolitan in?" she asked the clerk.

"Yes. He just came in."

"I will go to the parlor, if you will kindly show me the way. Tell him, please, that a woman would like to see him."

"One more unfortunate!" the manager ejaculated. "Can't you tell her that I'm out?"

"I've already told her that you were in. You'd better go and see her, she's a stunner."

"One of the sweet sixteen kind."

"Not much."

"Well, I suppose I must, but hereafter tell them I'm out or sick, or anything plausible."

"You are the manager of the Metropolitan, I presume," Helen said. "My name is Helen Herman and I have come to see if I can secure a position in your company."

"No, not now; there is no vacancy."

"But I thought you might want to engage ahead; or that you might have a vacancy soon."

"It's always an easy matter to find a woman."

"What, a good actress easy to find?"

"Why, yes. We have a score of applications. What experience have you had?"

"I have never been on the stage, but I have had three years' instructions. Here is my recommendation from my last teacher."

"Oh!" he exclaimed, as he caught the signature.

"I am my best in such parts as Meg Merrilies and Lady Macbeth. I can play any tragedy, but I'm afraid I couldn't do the sentimental."

"Do you think you could shed real tears on the stage?"

"I could do anything under the inspiration of a large audience."

"Do you think you could play such parts as Camille and Odette?"

"I might, but I'd much rather play heavier parts, and then I'm conscientious about it. I don't really believe such are very edifying."

"You may be right, but it is not what a woman does while on the stage, but her conduct in private life, that degrades the profession. But I didn't go into business for the purpose of ennobling it; it's purely a matter of business with me. How old are you?"

"I am in my twenty-first year and have no relatives living."

"And no young gentleman friend who will jump onto me and threaten to blow my brains out?"

"No, no."

"I have no place now and don't know exactly

when I will have. Are you really in need of employment?"

"Oh, no. I'm an heiress. I have chosen this simply because I think I'm fitted for it."

The shrewd manager's small eyes twinkled at this. This business was worth investigating after all! Perhaps the young woman couldn't act, but her appearance was certainly magnificent and her being rich would be quite a card. But how much was she worth? he wondered. "You are an orphan, twenty years old and heiress to—a hundred thousand?"

"My prospects are much brighter than that," she said modestly. "My estate is valued at something over three millions."

Mr. Vaut's mind was made up. This was certainly luck! For he would hire her on a small salary, take her to London and make a barrel of money!

"Miss Herman, I'm not a rich man; I can't pay you a sufficiently large salary to induce you to accept a place in my company. I have always given the lighter dramas, but if my leading lady could play heavy parts I would change our repertoire, I think."

"Oh, I'm sure I could please you."

"I will give you a trial to-morrow afternoon if you will come to the rehearsal."

"I will be there. At what time?"

"Half past two."

"You can depend on me," she said, and took her departure.

"Now where shall we go?" Sir Alfred asked.

"Out to Woodlawn; there's so much room there. I like lots of room."

"You'll hardly find it in the business you've chosen. Well, how did you succeed?" he asked with feigned indifference.

"Better than I had hoped. He told me to come for a trial at the rehearsal to-morrow. It's all right. I'll get the place."

"You have plenty of self-assurance, Miss Herman."

"Those who doubt themselves have reason to," some great man has said."

"Miss Herman, you are the first woman I ever met that I couldn't understand if I chose."

"Any woman can deceive a man if she wants to."

"Then you don't want me to understand you?"

"The truth is, Sir Alfred, that I don't exactly understand myself. I used to think I knew myself perfectly. I used to think it was better to be engaged constantly in reform work; to be always working in some cause. I longed to be as the respectable married woman is—that is, her style. You know she is very dignified, proud of herself, thanking God that she is not as other women are. That may be the proudest attitude and I used to fancy it; but since I've known you, I've been tempted to fling care to the winds, mingle with the herd, laugh when they laugh and forget that sorrow, misery and desolation are in every hand; to shut my ears to the cries of the weak and helpless, and laugh while heaven and the angels weep."

"Oh, Miss Herman, you've misunderstood me; it was never my intention to make you careless or frivolous."

"Yet more than once you have said, 'Why bother yourself about these things? you do not need to. Leave such things for older and wiser heads.' Sir Alfred Gates, don't you believe that 'knowledge of duty done is rich reward?' One's life may be hard, disappointments and sorrows may strew the way from the cradle to the grave, but it is something to know when he has reached the last station that the world is better for his having lived in it."

CHAPTER XL.

Two days later, when our party was seated upon the lawn, a messenger brought Helen a note.

"I must go down-town, Joe; won't you go with me to act as protector? Agnes is afraid I will try to run a race with a street car, or try to dash in front of one just for the novelty of the thing."

"Certainly. I'll get a carriage."

"No. I'm in a hurry," she said in an undertone. "Just call a cab."

"Oh, Joe, my chance has come," she confided when they were seated.

"How?"

"You know Vaut gave me a trial yesterday and he was so pleased that he promised me work the coming season; but to-day his leading lady is sick, seriously, he thinks, and he wants me to take her place right away. I'll play to-night, but don't you tell anybody, and you must intercede for me when I

ask Mrs. Daniels if I can go. She won't want to go, but you might take me, and Agnes and George might be persuaded to go. Now don't expect me to do very well in the rehearsal, as empty seats are no inspiration."

So Helen played Juliet that night, and although she would have preferred a heavier part, she did so well that the manager came to her afterward, asked her terms and insisted on a contract at once and told her they would sail shortly for England.

"Make any conditions and any price; I will sign the contract at once. But I have a suggestion. Short skirts are customary for dancing girls, but don't you think the dance could be as gracefully executed if the skirts were a little bit longer? Such things are demoralizing. And don't you think the idea is threadbare? You might make a great hit if you invented something new for the ballet."

Mr. Vaut understood Helen and knew that he must use some show of logic with her. "Miss Herman, I know you have a good idea of the artistic, the beautiful, and you probably know that to-day people are more artistic and poetical than ever before. Now, if you were to go into an art gallery and look upon the pictures wrought by old and renowned masters, would your eyes see nothing but the nude? would not the art, the poetry, the soul of the thing stand out so conspicuously that the nudity would be lost sight of? It is so with the ballet; the ease, the grace, the poetry of the movement is what the refined see; only the low and the vulgar think of the gross outline. 'To the pure all things are pure,' and surely, Miss Herman—"

"Make out the contract and I will sign it at once."

He wanted her to engage for a year, but she would only hire for the fall and winter, as her financial affairs in America would require her presence the coming spring.

When she stepped out at the stage door she was surprised to find Sir Alfred waiting for her. "Where's Joe?" she asked.

"Miss Easton was not well when she came, it seems, and Joe had to take her home. Are you ready?"

"Oh, I guess she's just a little nervous from the emotional strain of the past few days and blue because Mr. Sanderson had to leave this afternoon. Yes, I'm ready. But who told you I was to take part to-night."

"Why, I guessed it from your maneuvers; and I knew you the minute you came on."

"Where is your friend?"

"At the hotel, I suppose; he wasn't at the theater."

Helen was actually nervous during the ride. Finally she said: "I guess you are not going to offer your opinion, so I shall ask you for it."

"You were simply perfect. But just to satisfy my curiosity, won't you tell me something about yourself and how it is that you are so ambitious?"

"Why, it's no uncommon thing to-day for women to be ambitious."

"But you must have had some special inheritance of that sort."

"I don't know what my parents were. I was always considered an odd child, but nothing remarkable

that I know of. But it was an old man who lived near us—nurse and I—to whom I owe the awakening of my ambitions. I believe that man had read everything in the English language; he seemed to know something about everything that could be mentioned. I used to stop there on my way to and from school for a drink of water, when he would talk to me about my lessons and tell me stories. Then he loaned me books, but they were beyond my years; I remember that he gave me 'Plutarch's Lives' when I was not twelve years old. I shirked reading it until he got to catechising me about the different men and their exploits. So I made myself read two pages a day and then five until I got interested. He'd pat me on the head and tell me I'd make a great woman some day; but if I ever said I disliked any book he loaned me, he'd simply say that I hadn't read enough to judge very accurately. That stirred my pride and I determined to inform myself on every subject possible; that's how it began and I'm not sorry."

CHAPTER XLI.

THE evening before the day of Helen's departure had arrived and she and Joe were walking in Congress Park. The band was playing "Home, Sweet Home."

"Isn't the music lovely? But that doesn't mean anything to me."

"Well, Helen, it's your own fault. You could have your choice among a dozen."

"I don't believe that; but I don't want anybody. I think I'll probably settle down after a term of public life, adopt three or four orphan children and educate them."

"Good heavens! Anything else you intend to try your hand at? But, mark my word: if you go to England you'll never come back single. I'm down on Englishmen, but I'll be fair and admit that Lord Avon isn't a fair sample."

"Oh, they're all right in their own country, but they are out of their place fortune-hunting in America. Did you ever hear of a titled foreigner marrying a *poor* American girl? And do you suppose his lordship would have wanted Agnes or me either if he hadn't known that we had great expectations?"

"And how about the other one?"

"Oh, he doesn't want any, rich or poor. But hasn't we better go back? They are dancing and I want to trip the light fantastic with his lordship before I go."

"Won't there be weeping and wailing when he knows you are gone? He'll want to murder us all for conspiring to keep it from him. He thinks he's got a mortgage on you."

"I don't see why he should. I refused him twice last night."

"S'pose he thought two negatives made an affirmative."

"Oh, but last night wasn't the first siege. Why, every time I've danced or walked or rode with him the last two weeks, it's been the same story."

"The great milksop!"

"Don't, Joe, I like him; he's a perfect cure for melancholy. And he has the loveliest hair I ever saw."

"Well, Helen, don't entirely forget me when you are away. Will you write?"

"Yes, often, and tell you everything. You are the best friend I have in the world," she said as they passed into the ball-room.

The next day Helen sailed. No one but the Eastons and Sir Alfred knew of it at the time, but the society papers made much of it later. Of course her friends had remonstrated with her. Agnes cried day and night; Mrs. Daniels talked, scolded and pointed out every actress of unsavory reputation as a warning; Joe thought it "a crazy scheme" and his father came up from Washington and gave Helen a plain, straightforward, fatherly talk. Sir Alfred said nothing, but lost no opportunity to sneer, which only made her more determined. She vowed that before many years should pass he would know of her playing on the best stages of America and England. So she went full of hope.

His lordship was almost beside himself. He raved and wanted to wring Joe's neck and to meet Sir Alfred with a gun.

"What's the girl to you?" he said to his friend when they were alone.

"No more than any intelligent woman," Sir Alfred answered calmly.

"Well, she's much more than that to me, I wish you to know. I would marry her to-morrow if she were penniless; if she were a chambermaid in this very hotel. Who's there?"

"Joe Easton."

"What's your business? Come in, d—n you."

"Now, what's all this row? Miss Herman requested me to keep her secret from you."

"Yes, and you two stood calmly by and let that girl go to her ruin."

"I imagine that Miss Herman can take care of herself without any of our help. She has done so for twenty years," Joe said provokingly.

"What do you know, you upstart?"

"That she has refused you, times without number, and a girl who can refuse a title is safe anywhere."

"She'll not find it so on the stage in London. Though she were an angel she would be scandalized. I tell you, you don't know what you are talking about, you schoolboy."

"What is it to you, you curly-pated dandy? What would you care for her if you were not after her money? It's only her money you're after. You were engaged to my sister three months ago. You infernal scoundrel, there ought to be some law—"

"Your sister deserves all respect from me. She saw fit to dismiss me."

"I should have disowned her if she hadn't. Miss Herman's three millions had a remarkable effect on your affections; it was a case of love at first sight!"

"I'm not after a rich wife. I'd marry Miss Herman if she didn't have a cent."

"Talk is cheap!"

"This is my room, Mr. Easton!"

"And I'll vacate gladly enough. But you needn't jump onto Sir Alfred; he had no more to do with it

than the rest of us. She knew you wouldn't have any more of the gentleman about you than to take passage on the same steamer, and a girl who cares anything for her reputation don't want you hanging around her," Joe said, as he slammed the door.

Sir Alfred was as calm as the proverbial cucumber. When the door closed behind Joe, his lordship turned to his friend, saying:

"That bet can be counted off so far as I am concerned. I haven't won so far, but if I am fortunate enough to win Miss Herman, why, I won't accept the money, so don't bother yourself on that score any longer."

"If you win the bet, my lord, it will most certainly be paid."

"It will not be accepted on Miss Herman, I want you to understand. And now that's all; I'm going home on the next vessel."

CHAPTER XLII

LORD BARNETT was entertaining a few of his bachelor friends in a very swell manner at a fashionable London club house. The manager of the Metropolitan had, by hook and crook, secured an invitation

"Who is our American guest?—an official?" Sir Wm. Ellerton asked of a half drunken earl at his side.

"Oh, no, he's the theatrical (hic) man. He's got the damn'dest (hic) handsomest actress in all (hic) London. I want to meet her. (hic.) Mr. Vaut,

my friend wants to (hic) know your business. (hic.)”

“Why don’t you bring him to my theater. My leading lady, if she were playing at the Lyceum or the Royal, would draw all London. And besides being an actress, she is an heiress.”

“Oh, indeed!” several exclaimed, and somebody said: “Heiresses are thick in America, but they don’t usually go upon the stage, do they?”

“There’s no accounting for women,” the wily manager said. “You must see my star to appreciate her magnitude. I’ve got her for the winter and perhaps longer. But I am surprised that Lord Avon has not told of the fair and rich American. Pardon me, My Lord, perhaps you have some private personal interest in my star.”

His lordship’s blood boiled; he wanted to choke the blackguard. But speaking as calmly as he could, “No, Mr. Vaut, I have no other interest in Miss Herman than that which any gentleman should feel for a friendless girl, but I hope to soon have a claim upon her that will frustrate your plans.”

The manager couldn’t understand the situation, but risked this reply: “I beg your pardon, My Lord, but I have as good an opinion of Miss Herman as you can possibly have, and I know that she will not break her contract.”

The next day his lordship tried in vain to see Helen, going repeatedly to her hotel only to find her out. He knew better than to go to the rehearsals, for she never accepted company on her trips to and from the theater, and, besides, he felt sure that he would kill that manager if he got half a chance.

That night the theater was packed, Vaut's judicious advertising at the wine-supper having accomplished his purpose. Helen was greeted with round after round of applause, encored and showered with flowers and gifts. The manager was in high glee.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE next day Helen was about to start for the rehearsal when a sharp knock sounded at the door.

"What's wanted?" she asked.

"The manager was hurt, perhaps fatally, about a half-hour ago," the messenger, a member of the company, replied. "He was having some new scenery hung and one of the frames fell, striking him on the head."

"Where is he? we must go to him at once."

"At the hospital, but it's no use to go, we wouldn't be allowed to see him. But what are we going to do? He owed every one of us—and the landlord a big sum."

"Well, I'll stand responsible for the board bill I've just got a remittance from home," picking up an unopened letter. "Tell the girls not to worry. You'd better notify some of Mr. Vaut's English friends," and the messenger passed on.

She opened her letter and found the amount sent to be one thousand dollars, just one-half the amount she had asked for. "Well, that will do for this emergency and I guess I won't need the costumes for a

while at least; but why didn't I get all I sent for?" and as she read her letter Lord Avon's card was sent up.

"Show him up," she said.

"I was to see you twice yesterday, Helen," he said, as he sat down beside her.

"Yes, but I can't give you very much time to-day. Our manager met with perhaps a fatal accident a little while ago and—"

"Thank the Lord! Oh, Helen—"

"Why, My Lord, I'm surprised!"

"Well, I'm glad his blood is not on my hands, but I've wished him dead. I had all I could to keep from challenging him for his conduct at Lord Barnett's supper."

"He didn't say any harm of me?"

"No, but he mentioned your name in that—"

"Oh, well, that doesn't hurt me any."

"Helen, you don't know. Oh, darling, I've not slept, I've been nearly crazy the past two days. You must, you must listen to advice. I love you, God knows I love you, but that's neither here nor there. Just heed what I tell you: you must quit such a perilous calling."

"Well, I'm likely to at least take a vacation, unless I get another place. I'm thinking of going back to America."

"Oh, darling, I wish you would; and you may guess how dangerous I know it to be here, to ask you to do such a thing. Go back to your home and friends."

"I haven't any to go to."

What do you mean?"

Just what I said. This letter informs me that my fortune has gone in a bank failure. I've only this thousand in all the world."

"Thank God! Oh, Helen, you won't doubt me now. I know you've always thought me simply after your money; and I'm glad, so happy! Darling, I'm not rich, but I can take care of you. I never worked in my life, but I could work for you if you would come to me now. Don't go back to America. Oh, what more can I say, what more can I do to prove my love for you?"

"Nothing," she said, brokenly. "Your kindness touches me deeply—I do not doubt your love, but I do not love you in return."

"But you might learn to. Darling, I'm a changed man. I am through with my reckless companions and I will live so that you would— Oh, I know we could be happy together. Won't you be my wife?"

"No, my dear friend, I respect you, I like you, but I can't marry you."

"Helen, is your answer final?"

"Yes," she said, with swimming eyes.

"My punishment has been terrible. A year ago I thought no American woman would refuse a title, but I must hereafter think better of America. But didn't you at first try to lead me on? you certainly didn't do it, Helen, for the pleasure of rejecting me."

"No, no; it was wicked enough, though not that bad. My Lord, you have been so honorable with me that I must make a confession. Was that some one at the door?"

"I heard nothing." And then Helen told him the whole story of the scheme for her release of Agnes.

"It's my punishment, Helen. There was once a young girl who thought as much of me as I do of you. I took advantage of her love and now she is in the insane asylum. Poor Cleonice, you are now avenged."

"Cleonice who?"

"Cleonice Dupont."

"Why, I knew her; we were schoolmates at L—. She told me her trouble, but not the author of it. You say she is in the asylum?"

"Yes. I suppose she sold her jewels and went to school, when she found I was to be married. I have been to see her once. She didn't know me, but calmly told me to take my place in the class. She thinks she is a Bible teacher and is trying to prove to her companions that the resurrection is at hand, when we will be reunited." Helen started and thought to say that it was Cleonice's trouble, not her religion, that caused her insanity, but his lordship was too impassioned to be interrupted. "It was awful, Helen. Oh, my remorse and my love for you will kill me. I only wish that such relief as came to her might come to me; that I might look upon you and not know you. But I can't hope for such mercy. I must go now." And taking her hand for an instant, he bade her good-bye. Then at the door he turned and gave her one look as she stood weeping in the middle of the room, and was gone.

His footsteps had hardly died away when the door was thrown open and Sir Alfred entered.

"Helen, I read of the failure in the morning's

paper, and fearing it would affect you, I resolved to come and see you. While on my way here I read of the accident and I rushed up without sending a card. Hearing voices within, I stood undecided for a moment and heard your confession to my friend. Now I wish to make one. I didn't understand; oh, how I wish I had known that 'the Englishman' meant his lordship!"

"What do you mean?"

"Helen, did it never occur to you that I loved you?"

"I'm sure that I never speculated much about the matter. You speak in riddles, Sir Alfred."

For once in his life Sir Alfred was excited; the thought of Helen's position, the matter of her confession, her refusal of his lordship and the notion that he had gathered from her conversation that she meant to quit the stage, being too much for him. Even his lordship had been, if not more calm, at least more collected than he, as he recounted the different phases of his feelings since he had known her, and explained his conduct of the last few months.

"I was a fool. Why couldn't I have known? I can never forgive myself for my harshness toward you. For you *did*, honestly, Helen, didn't you care for me a little?"

"Yes," Helen returned in a cold, calm, though not hard voice. "I confess that I did, and would at one time have renounced all my ambitions to become your wife. My conscience and reason were overborne by my feelings. I thank you after all for your unkindness."

"Why, you haven't gotten over it so soon?"

"Oh, yes, I have. And it's so queer. Why, I vowed I would bring you to my feet; it was my greatest ambition, and now that you come, I am perfectly indifferent. Isn't it strange? I've lived an age since morning. Oh, I'm not going to resign my ambitions; don't think that. The world shall yet hear of me as a star in my beloved calling, but things are in such a state politically that I believe I will engage at once in lecturing. I will work for—"

"You will fail," Sir Alfred said, himself again, as he rose to leave.

"I will work for the election of good men—not for myself; yet I may fail, but my beloved country shall have my best efforts at least. I will be true to her in every thought and deed."

"A thankless, loveless life, you will find. And you will sometime realize that as one God rules the universe, so one passion rules the heart, and realize that

"The light of the whole world dies,
When love is done.'"

THE END.

SISTER GRATIA

BY

C. EDGAR SNOW

This fascinating new novel from the pen of Chauncey Edgar Snow is sure to attract widespread attention. In point of originality, thrilling interest and good moral motive, "Sister Gratia" has no peer. The book is realistic, but not marred with evil license or moral taint; it is dramatic, but not ranting; it has a purpose, but not to "reform the human race," or to "furnish bread for the hungry;" its object is to elevate, enliven and entertain.

The opening chapter of "Sister Gratia" admits us into "one of those old houses in the picturesque environs of gay Paris," and here we are introduced to the *two* heroines and the hero of the story. Of the two beautiful girls we at first cannot decide which will enlist our sympathy. "Sister Gratia" takes us through Paris, Florence, Rome and New York City; it introduces us to Evert Dollond, whose noble character wins our endearment; to Grace and Lillian, the former strong and true to friendship for the latter, who, in consideration of her unrequited love for Evert, enlists our sympathies; to M. Jean Orfila, a kind hearted but eccentric Frenchman of means, in whose disposition is a fine sense of the humorous; to Count Victor Villemain, the shrewd schemer who endeavors to win by fair or foul means the love of Grace; and who, being a sagacious man of the

SISTER GRATIA

world, touches the foul fingers of felony with so light an impress as to challenge our wonder if not admiration; to the Marquis de Vilbonne, a "cold, dignified personage" who aids the count in many gentlemanly (?) enterprises; to the cautious coachman, Antoine, and Madame Fesch, Count Villemain's housekeeper, who "is but a living monument of bone and skin;" and then come numerous minor characters of more or less importance; and last to be considered by us is that "pretty little mite of humanity," Camille, of only four summers; for her sweet self lives are risked and fortunes spent; and yet, in her own words, "Camille ain't dot no doll," she acknowledges her poverty.

With a nicety of tact Satan himself is made to strut upon "this diminutive ball of substance and matter;" and the way his Satanic Majesty scores the weakness, the sinfulness and the moral depravity of aristocratic humanity, is truly soul-stirring. And from the opening sentence of "Sister Gratia" to the denouement on the final page of the book there is carried through this story a plot of thrilling interest. To achieve personal possession of the beautiful "Sister Gratia" becomes Count Villemain's object in life; to ascertain which girl, Grace or Lillian, is his sister, Evert Dollond spends a fortune and endangers his life repeatedly; to shield from the dagger's thrust the body of the man she loves, Lillian throws herself before the glittering blade; to save her maiden virtue and prove to the world that, in the nineteenth century, there are women who would prefer death rather than surrender honor, "Sister Gratia" becomes a prisoner. And so we might go on indefinitely reciting incidents that occur in this brilliant story, whose men and women seem to live and breathe. Paper, 25 cents.

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